

Jutta Gisela Sperling

Roman Charity

Queer Lactations in
Early Modern Visual Culture



[transcript] Image

From:

Jutta Gisela Sperling

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»Roman Charity« investigates the iconography of the breastfeeding daughter from the perspective of queer sexuality and erotic maternity. The volume explores the popularity of a topic that appealed to early modern observers for its eroticizing shock value, its ironic take on the concept of Catholic »charity«, and its implied critique of patriarchal power structures. It analyses why early modern viewers found an incestuous, adult breastfeeding scene »good to think with« and aims at expanding and queering our notions of early modern sexuality. Jutta Gisela Sperling discusses the different visual contexts in which »Roman Charity« flourished and reconstructs contemporary horizons of expectation by reference to literary sources, medical practice, and legal culture.

Jutta Gisela Sperling (PhD) teaches early modern history at Hampshire College, MA.

For further information:

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Introduction

More than three hundred artistic representations of Pero and Cimon, the breastfeeding father-daughter couple, are currently extant in museums and collections world wide – in the form of medals, book illuminations, drawings, prints, oil paintings, maiolica dishes, frescoes, chessboard decorations, marble statues, watches, and pharmaceutical bottles. Another few dozen images show the topic in its mother-daughter variety, attesting to the preoccupation of early modern audiences with Valerius Maximus's twin anecdotes on "filial piety" in his *Memorable Sayings and Doings* (written 31 ce).¹ In this collection of anecdotes meant to illustrate the values and virtues of Roman patriarchy, two stories recount how a mother and father, respectively, are breastfed by their own daughters after being sentenced to death by starvation for a capital crime. Since the early seventeenth century, the motif became known as Roman Charity, an indication that the anecdotes of Pero and Cimon and of the anonymous Roman daughter and her mother were understood to rival, complement, or parody the embodiment of Catholicism's prime virtue, Charity, in her personification as a breastfeeding woman.

But so far, no monograph has been devoted to the motif's analysis. There are a few isolated articles, and two Italian essay collections on the motif of Roman Charity, but the ubiquity of the theme in the visual arts, oral culture, and literary discourse of early modern Europe has in no way found the academic attention it deserves.² Such relative lack of interest is mirrored by curators' reluctance to display even the more masterful renderings of the topic. One of Rubens's renderings of *Roman Charity* languishes in the depository of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. Bartolomeo Manfredi's painting was removed from display in the Uffizi during construction projects. Alessandro Turchi's version hangs in the gift shop of the Galleria Doria Pamphili in Rome, unmarked; and Gerrit van Honthorst's piece went missing for a few years in the Landesmuseum in Münster. More such stories could be added.

This almost programmatic neglect is all the more disappointing because the imagery of the daughter-who-breastfed-her-father connects with a variety of current and vibrant debates among social, art, and gender historians of the early modern period. The iconography contributes to historical narratives of sexuality and the body, as it eroticizes maternity and queers our understanding of practices of lactation. In illustrating “filial piety,” it embodies core values of patriarchal family relations, but as an incestuous boundary violation, it develops into a quintessential figure of perversion and dissent. Its stylistic developments encompass the classicizing eroticism of Italian Renaissance art, the pornographic aesthetic of German miniature prints, the intensity of address in Baroque gallery paintings, and the hybridization of genres in eighteenth-century France. Under Caravaggio and Poussin, the motif underwent a revolutionary semantic change by association with religious subject matters. Despite the many backstories Pero and Cimon can tell about Giulio Romano’s portrayals of Dionysian excess, Sebald Beham’s representations of the “naked truth” of sexual desire, Poussin’s conciliatory approach to Judaism, and Greuze’s fall from grace with the Académie Royale, their images have rarely been studied or displayed. It is perhaps the subversive, strangely erotic, dangerously incestuous, and potentially perverse connotations of the iconography that make curators wary of exhibiting it. In Soviet-era Leningrad, for example, workers at a steel factory allegedly requested that a copy of Rubens’s Hermitage version of *Roman Charity* be removed from their dormitory because of indecency – an episode picked up by a British tabloid in an article entitled “Shocking pin-up was by Rubens” (1963) (Figure 2.27).³

My very first exposure to the iconography of Pero and Cimon produced arousals and resistances as well. It occurred ca. 30 years ago during my junior year abroad in Italy. Strolling through a Neapolitan exhibition of Baroque art, I was surprised, taken in, and then deeply unsettled by Caravaggio’s altarpiece *The Seven Works of Mercy* (1606) (Figure 2.1). The adult breastfeeding couple at the center – which I only later understood to be a father and his daughter – held an uncanny power over me, producing complex feelings of attraction and repulsion, curiosity and fear. Decades later, after having investigated Renaissance patriarchal family structures in a variety of modes and locations, and after having gathered my own experiences with (maternal infant-) breastfeeding, I came upon the painting a second time, during an extended stay in Italy. This time, I picked up the challenge. Despite the fact that I was supposed to work on a somewhat pedantic project on comparative legal history, I found myself increasingly obsessed not only with Caravaggio’s altarpiece but also with the entire visual and literary tradition of Pero and Cimon. Leafing through the photo collection of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence, studying Andor Pigler’s iconographical entries in his invaluable *Barockthemen* (1974), and perusing the internet to gather additional images, I collected a data base of more than 1,000 images of

representations of the motif of Roman Charity and related lactation imagery. The sheer volume of this visual tradition convinced me that breastfeeding pictures, and, among those, the iconography of Pero and Cimon, deserve an in-depth study. Having read David Freedberg's great book in the meantime, I wholeheartedly agree with his suggestion that representations of Roman Charity count among those images that might arouse and stir their beholders, an image that people might either break and mutilate or kiss and worship.⁴

Methodologically, I intend to approach the topic from a multi-layered perspective, one that aims at reconstructing different horizons of expectation and engages the peculiar "power" of the imagery itself. Both are complex tasks, the former because every attempt at historical contextualization needs to be regarded as tentative and incomplete, the latter because of the many contemporary and current debates about the respective limits of textuality and visuality as interlocking modes of representation.⁵ In an attempt to launch the pictorial turn among historians of the early modern period, I show how high art as well as B-level artifacts can serve as sources for the investigation of instances of resistance and subversion that were rarely verbalized. Concretely, I employ queer theory to emphasize the embattled nature of early modern patriarchy, taking the visual tradition of Roman Charity as a measure of parody and discontent.

On the level of content, I want to show how the eroticized maternal body came to rival phallic imagery at a time when modern notions about the self emerged. I argue that the displacement of mothering and the exploitative nature of father-daughter relations that the iconography depicts were fundamental to patrilineal kinship formation. In addition to symbolizing the reversals, contradictions, hierarchies, and exclusions of patriarchy, post-Tridentine Catholic artists and their audiences appropriated and politicized the ancient legend of Pero and Cimon as an expression of dissent. In this context, the semantic ambiguities in representing Roman Charity became the allegory's very theme. Furthermore, I trace how medical practitioners recommended adult lactations on occasion, providing for a "real" backdrop in understanding the iconography.

Current debates about the iconic turn, the power of images, and theories of visuality are helpful in providing a point of entry into my project; evoking them might justify this trans-disciplinary study of an iconographic tradition by a social and cultural historian. Part of my ambition is to add "history" to the long list of disciplines that according to W.J.T. Mitchell have been participating in the so-called "pictorial turn," the latest paradigm-shifting event in the humanities since the "linguistic turn" of the late 1960s.⁶ Observing how, since the time of Moses, iconoclasts have felt threatened by visual representations because of the obstinacy of the images they arouse, wishing them dead or mutilating them by attacking their material manifestations, Mitchell views images as parasitical life-forms that exist in the minds of their beholders as

their hosts. Going beyond Freedberg's and Belting's analyses of how certain images become inhabited by divine presence – thus acquiring power – Mitchell anthropomorphizes pictures by endowing them with agency and desire, and he likens them to idols, fetishes, or totems.⁷ Successful images are scary, as they, Medusa-like, attempt to acquire mastery of their beholders.⁸ Asserting the peculiar, non-verbal expressiveness of images, Mitchell paradoxically wishes “to make pictures less scrutable, less transparent,” and to “reckon with ... their silence, their reticence, their wildness and nonsensical obduracy.”⁹ Ultimately, he wants “to make the relationality of image and beholder the field of investigation,” and it is at this intersection that a historical reconstruction of horizons of expectation becomes important.¹⁰

Whitney Davis's recent discussion of what is visual about culture and cultural about vision foregrounds a historical approach as well when approaching images and meaning production in the arts. He insists on the need to investigate the many “relays and recursions” of cognition that occur during the apprehension of forms, motifs, and abstract significations of any given work of art. In Erwin Panofsky's vocabulary, every pre-iconographic understanding is or should be followed by iconographic recognition and iconological analysis – when, for example, a beholder distinguishes colors and shapes to signify thirteen men around a table, then proceeds to identify the motif as the last supper, and finally grasps the particular symbolic relevance of the motif for the artist and his audience. Davis, by contrast, refuses such a neat hierarchical division of levels of understanding and posits a more immediate interworking of all types of cognition, such that knowledge about the last supper is credited with helping to see thirteen men around a table.¹¹ This is relevant for my project because what we see on a painting of Roman Charity – a half-naked young woman offering her breast to an emaciated old man – is not necessarily succeeded smoothly by our recognition of the literary “motif” thus illustrated (filial piety), even less by any agreement about the wider significance of the motif in its pictorial form. On the contrary, if we did not know the story about Pero's heroic sacrifice from reading Valerius Maximus's *Memorable Doings and Sayings* (ca. 31 ce), seeing a pictorial representation of Cimon in the act of suckling might result in sexual arousal, disgust, or incomprehension, certainly not in any discrete “understanding” that Pero is rescuing her father from death by starvation.¹²

Davis posits that “resistance is an internal aspective conundrum in the iconographic succession,” and such resistance to seeing an eroticized adult breastfeeding couple as an allegory of filial piety is one of my main preoccupations in this book.¹³ Instead of viewing formal, iconographic, and iconological meanings as neatly succeeding one another, my intent is to show how signifier and signified were often at odds with each other in representing Roman Charity. In my view, such assertion of form over content and the tension

between visual representation and allegorical meaning have accompanied contemporary discussions on iconoclasm and the purpose of visual representations since the early sixteenth century. The eroticization of a “virtuous” or religiously enhanced motif thus connects with central questions of how to visually represent the sacred in both Protestant and Catholic camps. In the case of Pero and Cimon, such tensions on the signifying scene derive in part from the ekphrastic challenge that Maximus posits in telling his anecdote:

“Men’s eyes are riveted in amazement when they see the painting of this act and renew the features of the long bygone incident in astonishment at the spectacle now before them, believing that in those silent outlines of limbs they see living and breathing bodies. This must needs happen to the mind also, admonished to remember things long past as though they were recent by painting, which is considerably more effective than literary memorials.”¹⁴

Paradoxically calling into question the power of his own “literary memorial” to conjure up vivid mental images of Pero, “who put him [Myko/Cimon] like a baby to her breast and fed him,” Maximus seems to recommend painting as the proper mode and medium for the commemoration of this act.¹⁵ Wall paintings and terracotta statues excavated in Pompeii suggest that, indeed, visual representations of Pero were ubiquitous in the first century – whether as a result or precondition of Maximus’s anecdote is hard to tell. In the Middle Ages, the story survived largely in its literary form – and differently gendered twin version, as we will see shortly – but since the early sixteenth century, narrative renderings of the ancient emblem of filial piety were increasingly replaced by visual representations. Investigating the peculiar (metaphorical) condensations and (metonymic) displacements of meaning that happen in the process of visual allegorization, I ultimately strive for the de-allegorization of images of lactation such as Pero’s milk-offer to her father. I maintain that milk-relations as depicted in European art show traces of – historically contingent – ambiguities, tensions, and struggles between caregivers and recipients. Why was the eroticization and incestuous employment of breastfeeding imagery codified as an emblem of filial piety? How did women nursing more than one infant simultaneously come to be associated with “charity” and “humility” in the European visual tradition? And how did the picture status of such representations contribute to the fixation of their allegorical content and simultaneously call for a narrative solution of their inherent semantic contradictions?

The iconography of the Madonna Lactans has been acknowledged to be provocative because of the unstable semantics of the “Virgin’s one bare breast,” but the many representations of hybrid, incestuous, species-crossing, and gender-bending milk relationships in Renaissance and Baroque art still await commentary and analysis.¹⁶ A common feature of all those Charities, wet-nurses, goddesses, daughters, men, and she-animals shown to share their milk in early modern art with a bewildering variety of suckling creatures is



Figure 0.1: Sir Godfrey Kneller, Workshop, Portrait of Lady Mary Boyle and her Son Charles, ca. 1720

that none of them nurses her own children. Even the nursing Madonna is a very special mother nursing a very special son, one endowed with a corporate persona consisting of all believers in Christ. Sir Godfrey Kneller's portrait of Lady Mary Boyle in the act of nursing her son (ca. 1730) remains an absolute – British – oddity (Figure 0.1). It acquires intelligibility in the context of the

occasional portrayal of high-ranking ladies in the guise of Charity, such as Paulus Moreelse's painting of Duchess Sophie Hedwig of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel (1592–1642) and Sir Reynolds's painting of Lady Cockburn (1773).¹⁷ While these three paintings prefigure "modern" and enlightened family relationships with breastfeeding mothers at their core, the very promiscuity of milk sharing in the early modern Continental tradition belongs to another semantic universe, one that posits the lactating breast as a wandering signifier of desire whose very aim and purpose consists of boundary crossings and transgressions.

In this study, I stress the semantic density and instability of breastfeeding pictures by historicizing the process of allegorization on the one hand and politicizing the discourse of charity on the other. In particular, I propose to view representations of Roman Charity as contributions to a kind of counter-culture in which the Catholic enhancement of breastfeeding as care of the needy gets ironically twisted and parodied. The conspicuous absence of maternal milk-relationships in early modern art can be viewed as the very precondition for conceiving of Charity as the love of one's neighbor, configured as the nursing of strangers. In addition, it gives us a clue to understanding the inner workings of patriarchal family relationships. Medico-legal fictions of paternal blood as constitutive of kinship coexisted uneasily with the practice of wet-nursing, even though both shared a commitment to minimizing maternal input to the process of generation in their accounts of reproduction since antiquity.¹⁸ The iconography of Pero and Cimon is perhaps the most indicative example of the simultaneous evocation and displacement of the mother in the visual arts, highlighting that what ought to be consumed by Pero's child, gets – unduly – appropriated by her father.

Employing a broadly defined notion of "queer," I propose to view the story of Roman Charity as a riddle about kinship, in which the reversal of the generational trajectory and the substitution of mother's milk for paternal blood emphasize the fictive nature of normative patriarchal kinship. The eroticization of the maternal and the subversive image of incestuous matrilinearity that the breastfeeding daughter conjures up, but also the iconography's arousal of desire for regression and ego-threatening boundary loss, are in direct and open opposition to contemporary accounts of "straight" kinship. In a society in which female inheritance was seen as "obliquating" the straight line of patrilineal inheritance, the fetish-like obsession with Pero and Cimon among early modern art lovers expressed a "queer" desire for alternatives to patriarchy.¹⁹ This approach is in part motivated by the motif's circulation in Renaissance oral culture as a riddle about filiation, for which early sixteenth-century printed compilations give ample evidence. Equally useful is Carla Freccero's analysis of Marguerite de Navarre's "queer" fantasies of maternal parthenogenesis and incest as subversive of patrilineal kinship.²⁰

Furthermore, I regard the iconography of Pero and Cimon as evidence of an early modern view of sexuality that includes practices of adult lactation – despite all contemporary taboos prohibiting sex with a wet-nurse or breastfeeding wife.²¹ In a recent review article, Sharon Marcus deplores that “there is little extant work on the queerness of those conventionally considered heterosexual,” and she reminds us that “queer studies has, like feminism, expanded the definition of what counts as sexuality.” Scholars who focus on family formation have found the term “queer” useful, “understood as the antithesis of the normative nuclear biological family.” With Judith Butler, Marcus speculates about the existence of what she calls “pre-social kinship,” which, “though marked as outside the law, bears the trace of an alternate legality.”²² My proposal to regard not only the all-female but also the cross-gendered lactation scene as indicative of queer desires that transcend the legal framework of patriarchy and oppose normative political structures follows Marcus’s lead in expanding our notions of queerness, sexuality, and kinship. The incestuous quality of the iconography hints, moreover, at the need for a historicization of the Oedipal conflict as the – embattled – birthplace of Freudian subjectivity. While Oedipus slept with his birthmother and killed his father, he certainly never violated the – prior? – taboo against having sex with one’s nurse or foster mom.

Mindful of Eve Sedgwick’s admonition to use “queer” as a transitive verb, I argue that in representations of Pero and Cimon, patriarchy is revealed to be “relational, and strange,” the product of anxiously guarded, arbitrary hierarchies and exclusions.²³ Maximus’s anecdote of filial piety illustrates ancient Roman patriarchy’s most cherished values by celebrating a serious boundary transgression, thus queering the notion of patrilinearity at its core. More specifically, the many ambiguities in Pero’s and Cimon’s relationship confirm the paradoxical outcomes of extreme paternal needs and filial submission. If in some renderings of Roman Charity, Pero is shown to be a “woman on top,” relegating her father to a regressive dependency, others depict her as the abject victim of an Über-patriarch’s incestuous demands.

The systematic study of this iconography thus seeks to answer Fiona Giles’s call for the historical study of queer, i.e., adult breastfeeding practices, and aims at including an archive of early modern lactation imagery in Griselda Pollock’s “virtual feminist museum.”²⁴ Appropriating Aby Warburg’s idea of a picture atlas that would document the workings of a non-verbal, “deeper, pictorial unconscious, a memory formation of deep emotions ... held in recurring patterns, gestures, and forms,” Pollock gives renewed consideration to his concept of “*Pathosformeln*” in the visual arts, i.e., recurrent signifiers of strong emotions.²⁵ The persistence of certain images since antiquity was for Warburg indicative of the need to establish what German art historians nowadays call “picture science” [*Bildwissenschaft*] and to define the history of art as a discipline with the potential of transcending both history and anthropology.²⁶ Pollock

points to Freud's deep interest in ancient artifacts, hinting that his acquisition of a statuette of Isis breastfeeding Horus and another one of the Egyptian Uraeus, "the phallic but also eternal female emblem of everlasting pharaonic power," testify to his intuitive awareness of the importance of pre-Greek, pre-verbal, and female-centered imagery.²⁷ Warburg's idea of a "pictorial unconscious" might explain, perhaps, the particular resilience of Maximus's anecdote in its visual form.

Next to art, also religious discourse challenged the "law of the father" on occasion by relating milk to grace and Scripture and by allegorizing Charity as a breastfeeding woman.²⁸ Joel Fineman adds to this discussion by linking theories of allegorization – in language – to psychoanalytic discourse and the structure of desire, and claims: "The movement of allegory, like the [Freudian] dreamwork, enacts a wish."²⁹ Fineman posits that allegories become "representative of the figurality of all language" and acquire the status of "trope of tropes," an insight that challenges art historians to consider whether visual allegories express a similar meta-content.³⁰ Historically speaking, "allegory seems ... to surface in critical or polemical atmospheres, when for political or metaphysical reasons there is something that cannot be said."³¹ In my view, the motif of Roman Charity is a perfect example of such a politically relevant allegory, which silenced but embodied visually what needed to remain unsaid in early modern Europe. Its subversive content and anti-patriarchal polemic remained conspicuously confined to the realm of pictorial ambiguity.

This study's privileging of visual sources over the literary tradition, and the investigation into the distinct non-verbal qualities of artistic representations, amounts to abandoning the new historicist assumption of all culture as text.³² Proponents of the iconic turn in Germany have been clamoring for the recognition of visual cultures' pre- and extra-linguistic features for some time now, especially followers of Heidegger.³³ While I am reluctant to celebrate the demise of language as a quasi-colonizing agent, I am committed to doing justice to pictures' dense, non-linear, and highly ambiguous mode of expression. And while there will be plenty of textual analysis in this study, the relationship between text and image is always regarded as precarious and fraught with tension. This connects with early modern viewers' interest in renderings of Roman Charity, fueled to a large extent by contemporary discussions about artists' and poets' respective capacity for mimesis and the value of paintings as memory aids and substitutes for historical discourse. Pero and Cimon continue to have shock value, and as much as the motif's imagery is based on a literary tradition, the visualization of its narrative content very often goes beyond the ekphrastic promise of its source.³⁴

In a wider sense, this book seeks to establish the lactating breast as a signifier of desire at a time when early modern subjectivities are commonly believed to have emerged under the sign of the phallus.³⁵ The repression of the

ample visual tradition of breastfeeding imagery coincided with the attempt to abolish all non-maternal milk relationships in the eighteenth century, when reformers such as Rousseau advocated that women should avoid nursing other mothers' children.³⁶ The moral enhancement of exclusive maternal breastfeeding was instrumental in defining "enlightened" female domesticity and set restrictive boundaries on who counted as family. It led to the gradual abolition of the wet-nursing system, the substitution of foundling homes with welfare payments to single mothers, and the experimentation with infant formula based on animal milk.³⁷ It also led to the abandonment of the motif of Roman Charity as an allegory that early modern viewers found "good to think with."

Despite the fact that feminist philosophers have criticized the Lacanian account of desire since the 1970s, attempts to historicize the emergence of phallic significations in early modern Europe have neglected to search for gendered alternatives.³⁸ Thomas Laqueur's research on what he called the "one-sex body" in Galenic medicine provides a point of departure for the recognition of male/female analogies in Renaissance medicine, but the heavy critique against some of his more sweeping assertions led to the unfortunate underestimation of anti-Aristotelian knowledge production in the sixteenth century and what it meant for the recognition of female desire.³⁹ Patricia Simons's recent book *The Sex of Men in Premodern Europe: A Cultural History*, however, engages closely with Laqueur's claim regarding the ubiquity of phallic imagery in Renaissance medicine and argues that ejaculation, not erection, was the mark of virility in early modern culture. Such association of maleness with fertility, materiality, abundance, and softness seems to suggest a more androgynous – even maternal – model of phallic signification.⁴⁰ I would like to go a step further and propose to view medieval and early modern lactation imagery as itself expressive of desire and semantic power. Arguably, allegories of charity, which in medieval religious discourse denote the reciprocity of giving and receiving, and the circular view of giving as receiving came to rival prevailing notions of sexuality as penetration in Renaissance discourse.

A note on social practices: one of my aims is to establish adult breastfeeding practices as the backdrop against which Roman Charity flourished as a theme. Sources are scant, but there is some evidence that adult milk-exchange informed medical cures and religious forms of devotion. Pope Innocence VIII (1432–92), for example, was given human milk as a remedy of last resort just days before he died, a fact Giordano Bruno made fun of in his comedy *The Candle Bearer* (1582).⁴¹ In 1518, mystic and "living saint" Elena Duglioli miraculously nursed Antonio Pucci, papal nuncio, later Bishop of Pistoia and cardinal, who longed "for the singular grace of turning into a baby again" and fantasized about being breastfed by the Madonna.⁴² In 1677, Countess Elisabeth Henriette of Hessen was cured by woman's milk from a debilitating illness.⁴³ And in 1781, Madame Roland employed a so-called "têteuse" or "tireuse," i.e., a female

breast-sucker, to re-establish her milk flow, wishing to resume nursing her newborn daughter.⁴⁴ Interestingly, the transitive verbs “têter” and “tettare” in French and Italian, respectively, seem to refer predominantly to adult nursing practices until the eighteenth century.⁴⁵ Such “breasting” among adults could mean, as Madame Roland’s correspondence and Bruno’s comedy show, to have one’s breast sucked as well as to offer it, in an unusual conflation of the passive and active meaning of the verb. By contrast, infant nursing was referred to as “milking” [“allaiter” and “allattare”], a distinction indicative of the need to protect infant breastfeeding from the association with adult breastfeeding and its peculiar erotic charge. The existence of the verb “to breast” in French and Italian and the references to milk cures in European-wide medical treatises indicate that adult breastfeeding was widespread until at least the late eighteenth century.

This book has the wider aim of establishing “lactation studies” as a valid area of historical research.⁴⁶ In employing a variety of perspectives on the iconography of Pero and Cimon in particular, it proposes to shed light on several broader issues: the peculiar occurrences of patriarchal exclusions in early modern Europe; the figuration of paternal power as illicit, exploitative, and in need of rehabilitation; and phantasies surrounding the eroticized maternal body. It points to art as a distinct arena for the critique of patriarchal politics at a moment when iconoclastic movements forced a debate on the particular “powers” of visual representations. It asks what the imagery of Pero and Cimon reveals about the politics of allegorization at a time when women’s voices were regarded as “other speech” and relegated to the mute realm of visual embodiment. It analyzes how the iconography intervened in the debates on charity, iconoclasm, and representations of the sacred during the Reformation and post-Tridentine era. It discusses how the story of Roman Charity presents kinship as a riddle and couches the system of patriarchal filiation as an eroticized consumption of the daughter and “queer” displacement of the mother. And finally, it investigates how the lactating breast in all non-maternal milk relationships qualifies as a signifier of desire, power, and abundance.

The first section of my book, “Images,” analyzes the iconography in its various contexts and genres from the early sixteenth century to the late eighteenth. Roughly, the story goes as follows: in Reformation art, the breastfeeding daughter explodes notions of pictorial intelligibility through pornographic renderings. In the Italian Renaissance, Pero performs her act of “filial piety” in the form of an emasculating Medusa-image of considerable shock value alongside Salome and Judith. In Mannerist palace decorations, Pero becomes a Dionysian emblem of Orientalizing excess but also a sign of fertility and rejuvenation. Caravaggio’s altarpiece spiritualizes the motif, integrating Pero’s lactation scene in order to allude to the papacy’s need for “charitable” intervention and renewal. Caravaggio’s followers turned *Roman Charity*

into an eroticized gallery painting but preserved the religious and political associations of the theme by drawing formal analogies between the breastfeeding father and Saint Peter, most notably in scenes of the apostle's *Denial* of Jesus Christ. Poussin's integration of the mother-daughter breastfeeding scene in his *Gathering of the Manna* became emblematic of the classicizing genre of French history painting in discussions of the Royal Academy. In the eighteenth century, Greuze and his contemporaries used the theme of Roman Charity to experiment with a hybridization of the genre by infusing it with "bourgeois" aesthetic elements. At the same time, the motif became politicized during debates on political reform, which oscillated between utopian dreams of the "good father" and fantasies of parricide.

The second section of my book, entitled "Texts and Contexts," traces the different horizons of expectation that early modern viewers brought to bear on renderings of Roman Charity. In this section, I analyze the millenarian literary tradition of the motif since Valerius Maximus, pointing to the ironic subtext of the two anecdotes on filial piety despite their didactic presentation. I examine the practice of adult breastfeeding in medical writings and explore the gendered nature of milk cures and their ailments. I trace the visual universe within which Pero and Cimon were able to flourish by examining the interlocking iconographies of Charity and the Madonna Lactans and related breastfeeding imagery. Finally, I investigate father-daughter relationships in legal discourse.

My aim is to set the parameters within which a deeper, more general, but also more concrete and "applied," understanding the theme of Roman Charity might have unfolded, by reference to textual sources, adjacent iconographies, historical practices, and institutional discourses. How and why did early modern people find Roman Charity "good to think with?" In order to answer this question, this section offers an investigation of the gendered use of breast milk for therapeutic reasons, with male patients being showcased as model consumers. It highlights the practice of commercial breast-sucking to help with engorgement – an understudied byproduct of the wet-nursing industry in early modern times – and traces the raging debates on non-maternal nursing. It discusses the deep-seated resonance of the motif with breastfeeding Charity and the Madonna Lactans, pointing to ancient rhetorical theories of allegorization and the pre-classical visual tradition of nursing deities. In addition, it raises the question of the allegory's intelligibility at a time when the proliferation of breastfeeding imagery since the fifteenth century contaminated the Catholic spiritual meaning of Charity with profane associations. The last chapter in this section gives a sketch of father-daughter relations by pointing to the dowry as an instrument of women's dispossession, and by discussing the strengthening of patriarchal family relations in the context of emerging absolutism.

Chapter 1 investigates the first blossoming of the topic in early modern visual culture. It begins by analyzing the sudden shift in focus from representations

of the mother-daughter couple in late fifteenth-century book illuminations to the depiction of Pero and Cimon in early Renaissance and Reformation art. The earliest representations of the father-daughter couple are assumed to come in the form of late fifteenth-century North Italian medals, which in one case inspired a ceiling fresco in early sixteenth-century Cremona – even though upon closer inspection, the gendering of the couple appears ambiguous.⁴⁷ During the German Reformation, Nürnberg printers Barthel and Hans Sebald Beham produced a series of heavily sexualized miniature prints of *Pero and Cimon* starting in 1525, which are the first securely dated surviving renderings of the motif. At about the same time, oil paintings of the topic seem to have emerged in Venice that are no longer extant, in addition to a wall painting by Marcello Fogolino at the Ca' d'Oro. In the 1530s, Perino del Vaga produced a fresco of the theme, Rosso Fiorentino a marble relief, and Giulio Romano a drawing. A decade later, oil paintings of *Pero and Cimon* started to appear in Germany, by Georg Pencz, Erhard Schwetzer, and the so-called Master with the Griffin's Head. Pencz was influenced by the Beham brothers, with whom he was briefly imprisoned in 1525 on charges of atheism. Perhaps he also knew of Venetian antecedents, given his presumed trip to Italy. The assumption of an Italian-German succession in the development of the iconography is hard to ascertain, however, since the motif seems to have appeared simultaneously in Nürnberg and Venice in 1525–30. Also, the early Italian oil paintings we know of are no longer extant, making a close inspection impossible. One of them, painted in the style of a Venetian sensuous half-length portrait by an anonymous artist, disappeared on the Viennese art market in 1922; the other one survives in the form of a nineteenth-century copy of a lost original by Bernardino Luini (1480/82–1532). Toward the middle of the sixteenth century, representations of the motif became more frequent – also in France and the Netherlands – in the form of prints, drawings, maiolica dishes, terracotta statues, pendants, and chessboard decorations; it is rumored that even Titian produced a copy.⁴⁸ At the end of the sixteenth century, two anonymous Italian artists rendered the motif in oil – in Rome and Bologna – and these are the first Italian paintings of the iconography to have survived.

Since its early phase of proliferation, the motif appeared in different genres and contexts, such as sensuous half-lengths, pornographic miniature prints, and Mannerist palace decorations, each medium endowing the topic with a distinct meaning and significance. Painted in oil, *Pero* emerges in the early sixteenth century as an eroticized woman on top, analogous to “strong women” like Judith and Salome, and sensuous Venetian half-length portrayals of what are assumed to be courtesans. The provocatively graphic, if not pornographic, prints by the Beham brothers are contributions to the raging contemporary debate among Protestants over the seductive power of images, the presumed transparency of writing, and the deceptive nature of allegories. In Italian

palace decorations, Pero is either shown to be breastfeeding through the bars of a prison window, as oral versions of the story mandated, or she appears as a Dionysian, Orientalized figure of rejuvenation. In Giulio Romano's art, she participates in a visual rhetoric of sexuality that includes breastfeeding as a figure of excess. Perhaps inspired by Francesco Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (1499), breastfeeding mermaids, Egyptianizing fertility goddesses, and polymast figures of Nature are in this context her functional counterparts.

Chapter 2 is devoted to an analysis of Caravaggio's altarpiece and to the many genre paintings of *Pero and Cimon* it inspired among his contemporaries – friends and foes alike. It shows how Caravaggio was able to give a new meaning to the motif by Catholicizing it, i.e., by presenting Pero as successor to both the Madonna Lactans and the allegory of Charity. Retitled *Roman Charity*, the motif became the hallmark of Caravaggesque art, an observation that has eluded most art historians.⁴⁹ Starting with Bartolomeo Manfredi, famous for parsing and simplifying Caravaggio's more complex compositions, *Roman Charity* became a quintessential gallery painting, showing Pero and Cimon in a psychologically dense and intimate scene directly inspired by Valerius Maximus's ekphrastic account (1610–14). By contrast, Caravaggio tapped into oral versions of the theme, depicting Pero as breastfeeding her father through the bars of a prison window. Other early treatments of the theme are by Rubens (Hermitage version, ca. 1610–12) and Abraham Bloemaert (Kiel, 1610). Rubens and his followers painted the topic five more times, but it is his Hermitage and Amsterdam versions that became the object of several print editions, thus acquiring and retaining great popularity well into the eighteenth century.⁵⁰ A decade later, also Simon Vouet (1590–1649) and Guido Reni (1575–1642) appropriated the topic, contributing to the iconography's increasing popularity all throughout the seventeenth century.

Especially noteworthy is the afterlife of Caravaggio's altarpiece in Flanders and the Catholic Netherlands. Rubens and his school painted the story six times; Andreas Bloemaert, Dirck van Baburen, Gerrit and Willem van Honthorst, Caspar de Crayer, Paulus Moreelse, and sculptor Artus Quellinus the Elder produced multiple copies of the theme; Hans Jordaens III and Cornelis de Baellieur integrated it into their portrayals of picture galleries. This points to an intense preoccupation with the motif among Northern European Catholic audiences, including the religiously mixed clientele of Utrecht. Protestant painters such as Vermeer only obliquely referred to the iconography.⁵¹ In my view, the popularity of *Pero and Cimon* among Catholic painters and collectors as well as recent apostates suggests a certain discontent with the post-Tridentine papacy's claims to spiritual and temporal supremacy. Indicative of such political associations is the resemblance of Cimon with Saint Peter in paintings by the same artists. Caravaggio's breastfeeding old prisoner in his altarpiece *The Seven Works of Mercy*, for example, recalls the protagonist in his *Denial of Saint*

Peter (1610), who in turn resembles Saint Peter in Battista Caracciolo's *Liberation of Saint Peter* (1615). This latter painting was paired with Caravaggio's *Seven Works of Mercy* in the church of Pio Monte della Misericordia in Naples. Both prison scenes were hung opposite each other to indicate a certain thematic connection. The early seventeenth-century flourishing of *Denial* scenes, which express Saint Peter's moral failure to acknowledge his friendship with Jesus after he was taken prisoner, also indicates a certain critical stance vis-à-vis the papacy, but the similarity of Saint Peter's facial features with those of Cimon suggests an even more subversive association. Could it be the pope himself – Saint Peter's "infallible" representative on earth – who is cast as a guilty old patriarch in need of sustenance and rehabilitation through the milk and spiritual grace of a young woman? A painting entitled *Anti-Carità Romana*, attributed to Guido Reni, openly proclaims this connection. It depicts Saint Agatha, chained, receiving a visit from Saint Peter – another Cimon-look-alike – who not only restores her breasts but also appears to liberate her from her prison cell.

The French tradition of the theme is the subject of Chapter 3. Despite earlier versions of *Pero and Cimon* since the sixteenth century – most notably, the marble relief by Jean Goujon (and workshop) and Simon Vouet's two oil paintings – the topic assumed canonical status in French art only after Poussin adopted it. Similarly to Caravaggio, Poussin integrates the breastfeeding couple into a complex scene – in his case, the *Gathering of the Manna by the Israelites* (1637–39) (Figure 3.3). In line with his historical interests centering on ancient Rome, however, Poussin depicts the first version of Maximus's anecdotes about the unnamed Roman daughter who breastfeeds her mother instead of Pero and Cimon, who appear in Maximus's "external section" and were assumed to be Greek. This surprising rendering of the all-female version would remain unmatched except for a drawing by Guercino (1591–1666) and an oil painting, now lost, by Gregorio Lazzarini (1657–1730). In the revolutionary period, three further versions of the mother-daughter version appeared, all of which went missing.⁵² Poussin's unorthodox depiction of the mother-daughter scene in his *Gathering of the Manna* was the topic of a paper presented at the Académie Royale by Charles Le Brun in 1667. It inspired further experimentation with lactation imagery in general and Maximus's anecdote in particular in French art of the later seventeenth century, albeit in its cross-gendered variety.

In the late eighteenth century, *Pero and Cimon* experienced a late flourishing in French art at a time when paternal power and the reform of the monarchy were hotly debated. Jean-Baptiste Greuze (1725–1805) explored the topic as part of his ill-favored move toward the genre of history paintings, shortly before his painting of *Septimius Severus and Caracalla* (1769) caused him to withdraw from the academy and its Salon exhibitions altogether. While Greuze aimed at modernizing history paintings through the integration of

“genre-esque” elements – of which his *Roman Charity* is a first example – Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825) returned to the undiluted sternness of Poussin’s classicism. His follower’s *Roman Charity*, which only recently surfaced on the art market, provides one last proof of the fact that nearly all stylistic transformations in early modern European art since the Renaissance were accompanied by corresponding renderings of *Pero and Cimon*. In most cases, the adaptation of this allegory marked the expression of dissent, exemplified by the Beham brothers’ pornographic digression on the respective qualities of visual and textual representation, Caravaggio’s attack on the papacy, or French Enlightenment artists’ debate on patriarchal reform. With the insistence on exclusive maternal breastfeeding since the late eighteenth century, the refashioning of erotic sensibilities after the French Revolution, and the emergence of a new body politic at a time of secularization, the era of queer – that is incestuous, ironic, and anti-patriarchal – breastfeeding imagery drew to a close.

Chapter 4 begins by analyzing the twin versions of Maximus’s anecdote, in which a dutiful daughter breastfeeds her mother instead of her father, likewise condemned to starvation in a Roman prison. In this, prior, anecdote, prison guards watch the peculiar scene, wondering whether they are witnessing an act “against nature” – an allusion to the possibility of observing a female same-sex scene – or, rather, an expression of “Nature’s first law,” namely, to love one’s parents.⁵³ Deciding for the latter, they hurry to let the judicial authorities know about the daughter’s example of filial piety; as a reward for such self-sacrifice, the judges revoke the mother’s sentence and rehabilitate her. Maximus is the only author to have mentioned both examples of filial piety; all other ancient, medieval, and early modern authors who appropriated and rewrote the story in their sermon collections, encyclopedias, novels, and moral treatises concentrate on either one or the other. An interesting pattern emerges: in the Middle Ages, the father-daughter version of the theme was almost entirely repressed in favor of the unnamed Roman daughter who breastfed her mother, especially in books on women’s worthies such as Boccaccio’s and Christine de Pizan’s. When, in the Renaissance, *Pero and Cimon* experienced a revival, the all-female version survived mainly in textual sources in addition to a few prints and drawings, in stark contrast to the emerging popularity of the father-daughter couple in the visual arts.

The appearance of the numerous printed and translated versions of Maximus’s *Memorable Doings and Sayings* since 1469 cannot sufficiently explain the conspicuous absence of the mother-daughter scene in the arts, as the book tells both stories back to back. In my view, the sudden neglect of the lactating same-sex couple has to do with the invention of erotic art in the early sixteenth century, within which *Pero and Cimon* acquired a newfound or, better, rediscovered intelligibility and identity. By contrast, an eroticized all-female lactation scene was nearly unimaginable in the heavily male-centered sexual universe

of Renaissance art, despite allusions to this possibility in Maximus.⁵⁴ The attraction that the mother-daughter version held for medieval authors, namely, to emphasize reciprocity in female relationships of care, became obsolete by the early sixteenth century. Now the ongoing institutionalization of charitable giving, complete with government interventions and the focus on “deserving” recipients only, transformed the charitable ideal of giving as receiving into an instrument of social control.

The sudden omission of the suckling mother and the simultaneous celebration of Cimon’s displaced – and misplaced – desire for his daughter’s milk seem to be causally related. No analogy was supposed to be drawn between a daughter who chastely returns her mother’s gift of milk and Pero, who involves her father in a breathtaking spectacle for which words seem to be missing and whose heroic deed – according to Maximus – was best commemorated in non-verbal, visual form. In portraying Pero’s act as unique and utterly distinct from that of the unnamed Roman daughter, filial piety vis-à-vis one’s parents appears to be heavily gendered. The meaning of the same act differs vastly depending on whether it applies to moms or dads, which is why the question of reciprocity – or the lack thereof – in father-daughter relations emerges as one of the larger issues surrounding the iconography of Pero and Cimon.

Chapter 5 investigates adult lactations in medical discourse, followed by an analysis of the gendered usage of breast milk for therapeutic purposes and a discussion of contemporary anatomical research on milk production. Early modern medical scholarship was quite multi-faceted, allowing for observation of the erogenous qualities of the breast by followers of Galen and speculation about anatomical connections that were thought to exist between the pregnant womb and the lactating breast, thereby highlighting the importance of maternal milk in the process of generation. Nonetheless, heavily gendered treatises on the therapeutic value of breast milk in cases of gout and tuberculosis routinely present old men as model patients and young women or anthropomorphized cows in the role of suppliers for such cures. Only rarely do we find evidence of female same-sex suckling, when, as already mentioned, Countess Elisabeth Henriette was wet-nursed during a debilitating illness or Madame Roland employed female breast-suckers to cope with engorgement or re-establish her milk flow after a hiatus in breastfeeding. Investigations into the marvelous in nature, such as virginal lactations or milk production in men, were supposed to produce knowledge about the normative. Research on the chemical composition of animal and human milk sought to find alternatives to breast milk, a project that became especially pressing when rates of infant abandonment – and the mortality of foundlings – skyrocketed in the sixteenth century, but it was also motivated by contemporary polemics against wet-nursing.⁵⁵ Vilifying wet-nurses as prostitutes or adulteresses, seventeenth-century medical discourse paved the way for Rousseau’s vision of exclusive maternal

nursing as the hallmark of bourgeois domesticity, which, ironically, coincided with an intensified debate on the erotic qualities of breastfeeding.

Chapter 6 lays out the wealth of ancient, medieval, and early modern lactation imagery in conjunction with rhetorical theories of allegorization as “other speech.” It presents the proliferation of lactation scenes in the visual arts as a counter-discourse to legal and political constructions of patriarchy, which rested on the exclusion of women from the public sphere of lawmaking and the fiction of patrilineal kinship. A causal connection emerges between the politics of suppression, ancient rhetorical strategies that conjure up female figures as mute and pitiful reenactments of their own exclusion, and the allegorized reappearance of female bodies in the visual arts. The stress on breastfeeding accompanies, but also criticizes, contemporary notions of motherless kinship grounded in the transmission of paternal blood. Post-Byzantine artists in Italy and Flanders reinvent the focus on breastfeeding as a mark of divine abjection through depictions of the nursing Madonna and allegories of Charity. In the Renaissance, the naturalistic representation of wet-nursing follows the popularity of nativity scenes, but milk sharing is also eroticized as a form of Dionysian, i.e., exotic and Orientalizing, sexuality in mythological, classicizing visual culture. In post-Tridentine religious paintings, the semi-allegorical inclusion of nursing women in scenes of eschatological significance underscores the importance of Charity in Catholic discourse, but starting in the early seventeenth century, the iconography of Pero and Cimon expresses a visual language of dissent that parodies orthodox Catholicism and criticizes the papacy’s claims to supremacy.

All of these different iconographies of lactation are characterized by the displacement of the mother and the attribution of universalizing qualities to non-maternal milk relationships. The Virgin Mary does nurse her own son, of course, but this son is also her God and father and represents all of suffering mankind. Both the Madonna Lactans and the visualization of Charity as a breastfeeding woman emerged at a time when nativity scenes became popular, particularly in representations of the *Birth of the Virgin Mary* and the *Birth of Saint John the Baptist*. Referring to saints’ vitae in the *Golden Legend* (1264) and the apocryphal accounts on which they were based, fourteenth- and fifteenth-century representations of childbirth – excepting the nativity of Christ – are rendered as upper-class confinement-room scenes. They depict the recently delivered mother as resting on a ceremonial bed, covered in expensive fabrics, receiving servants who bring food and visitors who offer gifts. Baby Mary and baby John are shown in the care of wet-nurses and birth assistants who are washing, swaddling, and – in a rare number of cases – even breastfeeding them.

The split between birthing and care-giving that confinement-room scenes accentuate is the backdrop against which the Madonna Lactans and allegories

of Charity derive visual meaning. While secular mothers would normally avoid breastfeeding their babies, if they could afford it, the Virgin Mary voluntarily engages in this act of “humility” by nursing her son and extending her loving care and milk to all believers in Christ. Charity does not refer to biological mothers either, as she nurses several infants or even older children simultaneously, all of them competing for her breast. As the personification of a Christian virtue, she assumes allegorical significance insofar as she voluntarily nurses the children of strangers as symbols of the indiscriminately needy, in a discursive universe that equates spiritual nourishment with milk since late antiquity.⁵⁶ While Charity’s semantic meaning initially emerges in reference to the Madonna Lactans and confinement-room scenes, she eventually comes to inspire and provide a framework of reference for the more naturalistic, narrative depictions of institutional wet-nurses in Italian hospital art since the late fifteenth century.⁵⁷ Wet-nurses who worked for foundling homes were charged with keeping the many abandoned infants alive until they could be placed with more permanent wet-nurses in the countryside – a charitable occupation if there ever was one, and a sad one at that, given the exorbitant mortality rates of foundlings. In the sixteenth century, Charities adopted both allegorical and narrative functions in Mannerist religious paintings such as Tintoretto’s and Palma the Younger’s. In those altarpieces, they refer to the metaphorical content of gratuitous breastfeeding as a source of grace but also represent women who take care of infants and deliver or beg for food as witnesses of prominent events in the history of redemption.⁵⁸ The pictorial differentiation of Charity into allegorical, narrative, and naturalistic representations, or a mix thereof, testifies to the ongoing importance of breastfeeding imagery in denoting and expressing the religious content and social practices of charitable giving.

The distinction between giving birth and offering infant care became even more pronounced in nativity scenes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as Saint Elizabeth and Saint Anne, mothers of Saint John and the Virgin Mary, respectively, vanish into the shadows and increasing numbers of highly visible birth-assistants crowd around the newborn baby. As mothers were relegated into invisibility in confinement-room scenes, the significance of ritual, spiritual, and mythological nursing was heightened in the visual arts. The Madonna Lactans fell out of favor with both Protestant and Catholic authorities because of the eroticized manner with which early sixteenth-century artists depicted her – except for a brief revival among Catholic painters around 1600. Generally speaking, the nursing Madonna gave way to the many permutations of charitable and eroticizing lactation imagery in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, most notably *Roman Charity*. Caravaggio’s momentous altarpiece *The Seven Works of Mercy* (1606) is programmatic for the way it depicts Pero as successor to the Virgin Mary, who has long weaned her – by now ca. ten-year-



Figure 0.2: Jesus Herrera Martínez, Altarpiece: *The Fire and the Flame*, Detail with Roman Charities, 2015

old – son and who benevolently and approvingly watches how the ancient Greek daughter performs “filial piety.”

The many unusual, non-maternal nursing scenes in Renaissance and Baroque art flourished in a society in which increasingly harsh patrilineal inheritance laws aimed at minimizing both mothers’ and fathers’ bequests to their daughters, and in which the maternal contribution to the process of generation was highly debated. Father-daughter relations emerge as fraught with tensions in the later sixteenth century, of which legal practice gives ample evidence. Chapter 7 analyzes the lack of reciprocity in patrilineal kinship relations as codified by law, suggesting that Pero and Cimon represent the need of patriarchy for unreciprocal gifts from its daughters – meaning: the undue appropriation of their resources – for survival. It addresses the *de facto* expropriation of daughters and widows from their family inheritance after the receipt of a

dowry, investigates the adoption of the dowry system outside of Italy and its growing popularity among the working classes, and discusses contemporary legal proposals to view a daughter's dowry as a charitable endowment rather than an inalienable right on her father's properties. With respect to Germany, France, and the Netherlands, it points to the strengthening of patriarchal hierarchies as a result of the Protestant marriage reform, the criminalization of elopements, and the weakening of joint-property arrangements in marriage. The reinvigoration of patrilineal legal practices took place in the context of a political debate that sought to legitimize the undisputable authority of kings and popes by reference to the ancient Roman construction of paternal power. Of particular relevance for my discussion of Roman Charity as a figure of dissent is the inter-Catholic debate on the post-Tridentine papacy's claims to supremacy in temporal affairs. Theories of political absolutism promoted the ancient Roman institution of the *pater familias* as a metaphor and *pars pro toto* for a reformed monarchy, but dissidents sought to remind their readers that French common law was not patriarchal.

With the reform of gender relations in the early nineteenth century and the invention of bourgeois family relations – intent on limiting the circulation of female body fluids within the nuclear family – the intelligibility of *Pero and Cimon* started to wane. The construction of breastfeeding as an exclusively maternal and domestic practice led to the complete eradication of a symbolic universe in which the lactating breast functioned as a signifier of spiritual love, but also of queer desire, dissent, and Dionysian excess.⁵⁹ Except for sporadic appearances in twentieth-century film and literature, the motif has recently re-emerged in the art of Jesus Herrera Martínez, who interprets the decidedly transgressive meaning of the image by placing himself in the position of both *Pero and Cimon* (Figure 0.2).⁶⁰ With the creation of an all-male *Roman Charity*, we have come full cycle: Herrera's phantasy of self-care and self-nurture and his gender-bending performance of breast-envy show how the iconography might be ready for a comeback. Overcoming the motif's willful neglect of the past two centuries, Herrera taps into a new context of queer sensibilities, in which, who knows, adult erotic lactations may have re-entered the realm of signification.⁶¹

NOTES

- 1 | Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, ed. and transl. by D.R. Shackleton Bailey, vol. 1 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000), 499–503, nos. V.4.7 and V.4 external 1.
- 2 | See, most recently, Robert Rosenblum, “Caritas Romana after 1760: Some Romantic Lactations,” in: *Woman as Sex Object: Studies in Erotic Art*, ed. by Thomas B. Hess and Linda Nochlin (New York: Newsweek, 1972), 42–63; Anna Tuck-Scala, “Caravaggio’s ‘Roman Charity’ in the Seven Acts of Mercy,” in: *Parthenope’s Splendor: Art of the Golden Age in Naples*, ed. by Jeanne Chenault Porter and Susan Scott Munshower (College Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 127–63; *Pietas e allattamento filiale: La vicenda – l’exemplum – l’iconografia*; colloquio di Urbino, 2–3 maggio, 1996, ed. by Renato Raffaelli, Roberto M. Danese, Settimio Lanciotti (Urbino: Quattro Venti, 1997); *Allattamento filiale: la fortuna*; colloquio di Urbino, 28–29 aprile 1998, ed. by Roberto M. Danese, Daniela De Agostini, Renato Raffaelli, and Gioia Zaganelli (Urbino: Quattro Venti, 2000).
- 3 | *Sunday Mirror*, 15 September 1963.
- 4 | David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 1.
- 5 | W.J.T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Whitney Davis, *A General Theory of Visual Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).
- 6 | Mitchell, *What do pictures want?*, 77; Keith Moxey, “Visual Studies and the Iconic Turn,” *Journal of Visual Culture* 7, no. 2 (2008): 131–46.
- 7 | Mitchell, *What do pictures want?*, 192; Hans Belting, *Bild und Kult: eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst* (München: Beck, 1970).
- 8 | Mitchell, *What do pictures want?*, 36.
- 9 | Mitchell, *What do pictures want?*, 49, 10.
- 10 | Mitchell, *What do pictures want?*, 49.
- 11 | Davis, *A General Theory of Visual Culture*, 196–98.
- 12 | Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, vol. 1, 499–503.
- 13 | Davis, *A General Theory of Visual Culture*, 205.
- 14 | Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, vol. 1, 501–03.
- 15 | Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, vol. 1, 501.
- 16 | Margaret R. Miles, “The Virgin’s One Bare Breast: Female Nudity and Religious Meaning in Tuscan Early Renaissance Culture,” in: *The Female Body in Western Culture: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Susan Rubin Suleiman (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: Harvard University Press, 1986), 193–208; idem, *A Complex Delight: The Secularization of the Breast 1350–1750* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008); Megan Holmes, “Disrobing the Virgin: The *Madonna lactans* in Fifteenth-Century Florentine Art,” in: *Picturing Women in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*, ed. by Geraldine A. Johnson and Sara F. Matthews Grieco (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 167–95.

- 17** | For Moreelse's painting, see Marilyn Yalom, *A History of the Breast* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 93. Sir Reynolds's painting is in the National Gallery, London, inv. no. 2077.
- 18** | For a first introduction into this complex topic, see Gianna Pomata, "Blood Ties and Semen Ties: Consanguinity and Agnation in Roman Law," in: *Gender, Kinship, Power: A Comparative and Interdisciplinary History*, ed. by Mary Jo Maynes, Ann Waltner, Birgitte Soland, and Ulrike Strasser (New York: Routledge, 1996), 43–64; Jane Fair Bestor, "Ideas about Procreation and Their Influence on Ancient and Medieval Views of Kinship," in: *The Family in Italy from Antiquity to the Present*, ed. by David I. Kertzer and Richard P. Saller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 150–67; Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
- 19** | Entry: "obliquus/obliquo," in: Egidio Forcellini and Giuseppe Furlanetto, *Lexicon totius latinitatis*, ed. by Francesco Corradini and Josephus Perin, vol. 3 (Padua: Gregoriana, 1965, faksimile ed. of the 4th ed. from 1864–1926), 430.
- 20** | Carla Freccero, *Queer / Early / Modern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), chap. 4.
- 21** | Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "Blood Parents and Milk Parents: Wet Nursing in Florence, 1300–1500," in: *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Florence* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 132–64.
- 22** | Sharon Marcus, "Queer Theory for Everyone: A Review Essay," *Signs* 31, no. 1 (2005): 191–218, especially 205.
- 23** | Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), xii.
- 24** | Fiona Giles, "'Relational, and Strange': A Preliminary Foray into a Project to Queer Breastfeeding," *Australian Feminist Studies* 19, no. 45 (2004): 301–14; Griselda Pollock, "What the Graces made me do ... Time, Space and the Archive: Questions of Feminist Method," in: Griselda Pollock, *Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum: Time, Space, and the Archive* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), 9–38. See also: Robyn Longhurst, "'Queer Breastfeeding': (Im)proper Spaces of Lactation," in: Robyn Longhurst, *Maternities: Gender, Bodies, and Space* (New York; London: Routledge, 2008), 101–116.
- 25** | Pollock, "What the Graces made me do," 18.
- 26** | Hans Belting, "Die Herausforderung der Bilder. Ein Plädoyer und eine Einführung," in: *Bilderfragen. Die Bildwissenschaften im Aufbruch*, ed. by Hans Belting (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2007), 11 24.
- 27** | Griselda Pollock, "The Object's Gaze in the Freudian Museum," in: Pollock, *Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum*, 67–86, especially 71–72.
- 28** | On the "milk of scripture," see Simon Richter, *Missing the Breast: Gender, Fantasy, and the Body in the German Enlightenment* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 45–46.
- 29** | Joel Fineman, "The Structure of Allegorical Desire," *October* 12 (Spring 1980): 46–66, especially 46.

30 | Fineman, "The Structure of Allegorical Desire," 48. On how to use post-structuralist analyses of textual allegorization in art historical research, see Cristelle Baskins's and Lisa Rosenthal's introduction to: *Early Modern Visual Allegory: Embodying Meaning*, ed. by Cristelle Baskins and Lisa Rosenthal (Aldershot, England; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2007), 1-12.

31 | Fineman, "The Structure of Allegorical Desire," 48.

32 | Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 15.

33 | Gottfried Boehm, "Die Wiederkehr der Bilder," in: *Was ist ein Bild*, ed. by Gottfried Boehm (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1994), 11-38; idem, "Jenseits der Sprache? Anmerkungen zur Logik der Bilder," in: *Iconic Turn. Die neue Macht der Bilder*, ed. by Christa Maar and Hubert Burda (Köln: Dumont, 2004), 28-43; idem, "Iconic Turn. Ein Brief," in: *Bilderfragen. Die Bildwissenschaften im Aufbruch*, ed. by Hans Belting (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2007), 27-36; idem, *Wie Bilder Sinn erzeugen: Die Macht des Zeigens* (Berlin: Berlin University Press, 2010; first publ. 2007).

34 | W.J.T. Mitchell, "Ekphrasis and the Other," in: *Picture Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 151-82.

35 | Richter, *Missing the Breast*.

36 | For a useful discussion of breastfeeding during the Enlightenment, see Mary Jacobus, "Incorruptible Milk: Breastfeeding and the French Revolution," in: Mary Jacobus, *First Things: The Maternal Imagery in Literature, Art, and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 207-30.

37 | Valerie Fildes, *Wet Nursing: A History from Antiquity to the Present* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988); idem, *Breasts, Bottles, and Babies: A History of Infant Feeding* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1986); George D. Sussman, *Selling Mother's Milk: The Wet-Nursing Business in France 1715-1914* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982); Barbara Orland, "Enlightened Milk: Reshaping a Bodily Substance into a Chemical Object," in: *Materials and Expertise in Early Modern Europe: Between Market and Laboratory*, ed. by Ursula Klein and E.C. Spary (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 163-97.

38 | For a few of these critiques, see Luce Irigaray, *Speculum. Spiegel des anderen Geschlechts* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1980; first Fr. ed. 1974); Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982); Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Bracha Lichtenberg Ettinger, "Matrix and Metamorphosis," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 4, no. 3 (1992): 176-206.

39 | Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990); Katharine Park and Lorraine Daston, "Destiny is Anatomy," essay review of Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (1990), *The New Republic* (18 February 1991): 53-57; Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference*.

40 | Patricia Simons, *The Sex of Men in Premodern Europe: A Cultural History* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

- 41** | Giordano Bruno, *Il Candelaio*, ed. by Enrico Sicardi (Milan: Casa Editrice Sonzogno, 1888), 128–29; Giovanni Cipriani, “L’allattamento salvifico: un problema di papi e filosofi,” in: Danese et al., *Allattamento filiale*, 103–24, especially 118.
- 42** | Gianna Pomata, “A Christian Utopia of the Renaissance: Elena Duglioli’s Spiritual and Physical Motherhood (ca. 1510–1520),” in: *Von der dargestellten Person zum erinnerten Ich: Europäische Selbstzeugnisse als historische Quellen (1500 1850)*, ed. by Kaspar von Greyerz, Hans Medick, and Patrice Veit (Cologne: Böhlau, 2001), 323–53, especially 336.
- 43** | Heide Wunder, “Frauenmilch-Muttermilch. Eine Geschichte aus dem 18. Jahrhundert,” in: *Geschichte in Geschichten. Ein historisches Lesebuch*, ed. by Barbara Duden, Karen Hagemann, Regina Schulte, and Ulrike Weckel (Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 2003), 295–305, especially 297, note 17.
- 44** | Madame Roland, Letter no. 39, 11 January, 1782, in: *Lettres de Madame Roland*, vol. 1 (1780–87), ed. by Claude Perroud (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1900), 131.
- 45** | In Jaucourt’s article on “teter,” the verb refers to infant breastfeeding, but this could be due to Enlightenment debates on wet-nursing and the proposed abolition of all but mother-infant nursing relationships. “Teter,” in: *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers ...*, ed. by Denis Diderot and Jean Le Rond D’Alembert (Paris: Briasson, 1751–65), vol. 16 (1765), 205.
- 46** | For a related effort, see *Medieval and Renaissance Lactations: Images, Rhetorics, and Practices*, ed. by Jutta Gisela Sperling (Aldershot, England; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2013). See also Yasmina Foehr-Janssens’s research project at the University of Geneva entitled “Lactation in History.”
- 47** | Marika Leino and Charles Burnett, “Myth and Astronomy in the Frescoes at Sant’Abbondio in Cremona,” in: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 66 (2003): 272–88, especially 273–74.
- 48** | Tuck-Scala, “Caravaggio’s ‘Roman Charity,’” 135–36.
- 49** | See one notable exception: Tuck-Scala, “Caravaggio’s ‘Roman Charity,’” 137.
- 50** | Elizabeth McGrath, *Rubens: Subjects from History*, ed. by Arnout Balis (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 1997), vol. 2, 97–114.
- 51** | On Vermeer, see Gregor J. M. Weber, “Caritas Romana: Ein neu entdecktes Bild von Johannes Vermeer,” *Weltkunst* 70, no. 2 (Feb. 2000): 225–28. There seems to have been a painting by Rembrandt, which, however, does not seem to have survived. Bernard Picart produced a print of it in 1724–33, which is preserved in the British Museum (inv. no. 1861,1109.816).
- 52** | These paintings were by Jean-Charles-Nicaise Perrin (1791), Angelika Kauffmann (1794), and Etienne-Barthélemy Garnier (1801).
- 53** | Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, vol. 1, 501.
- 54** | Patricia Simons, “Lesbian (In)Visibility in Italian Renaissance Culture: Diana and Other Cases of *donna con donna* [woman with woman],” *Journal of Homosexuality* 27, nos. 1–2 (1994): 81–121; special double issue: *Gay and Lesbian Studies in Art History*, ed. by Whitney Davis.

- 55** | Barbara Orland, "Why Could Early Modern Men Lactate? Gender Identity and Metabolic Narrations in Humoral Medicine," in: Sperling, *Medieval and Renaissance Lactations*, 37–54; Orland, "Enlightened Milk: Reshaping a Bodily Substance."
- 56** | Max Seidel, "Ubera Matris: Die vielschichtige Bedeutung eines Symbols in der mittelalterlichen Kunst," *Städel-Jahrbuch* 6, N.F. (1977): 41–99.
- 57** | Diana Bullen Presciutti, "*Carità e potere*: Representing the Medici Grand Dukes as 'Fathers of the Innocenti,'" *Renaissance Studies* 24, no. 2 (2010): 234–59; idem, "Picturing Institutional Wet-Nursing in Medicean Siena," in: Sperling, *Medieval and Renaissance Lactations*, 129–46.
- 58** | Jutta Gisela Sperling, "Allegories of Charity and the Practice of Poor Relief at the Scuola Grande di San Rocco," *Wallraf-Richartz-Jahrbuch* 70 (2009): 119–46.
- 59** | On representations of breastfeeding in nineteenth-century French art, see Gal Ventura, "Nursing in Style: Fashion versus Socio-Medical Ideologies in Late Nineteenth-Century France," *Journal of Social History* 48, no. 3 (2015): 1–29.
- 60** | John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* (New York: The Viking Press, 1939); Abraham B. Yehoshua, *The Retrospective* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013); Michelangelo Antonioni, *L'avventura* [The adventure] (Janus Films, 1960).
- 61** | Fiona Giles, *Fresh Milk: The Secret Lives of Breasts* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003).