'Litel Enfaunt That Were But Late Borne':

The Image of the Infans in Medieval Culture in North-Western Europe

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'Litel Enfaunt That Were But Late Borne':

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in North-Western Europe

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Abstract

Notwithstanding nearly four decades of debate on the history of childhood, medieval *infantia* - especially early infancy - remains probably the least-known period of life. Medieval art may seem to present the infant merely as a swaddled cocoon, an image often misinterpreted. High infant mortality rates in the past - although accurate demographic data for the Middle Ages are lacking - have persuaded some scholars that parents regarded infants as potentially short-lived creatures whose demise was met with resignation or even indifference.

However, this dissertation provides a more nuanced imagery of early infancy in medieval culture. Contemporary authors were interested in infants not just from a medical or moralistic viewpoint, but also as an *innocent* being whose death could be truly tragic. The biblical story of the Massacre of the Innocents inspired artists, authors and playwrights alike, not simply as one episode from Christ's infancy but as a horrifying drama of great emotional impact. When the *dans macabre* emerged as a literary and visual theme, it included the young *infans* amongst Death's archetypal victims. Such an attitude to infants presupposes that their mortality was regarded not with indifference but rather as profoundly moving.

Yet there was also an ambivalent attitude towards the infant, who was considered weak and immature as well as innocent. In fact, the age of heavenly perfection to be adopted by all mankind at the Resurrection was generally believed to be that of the adult Christ. Nonetheless, the introduction of a *limbo puerorum* suggests not only a desire for a more merciful fate for unbaptized infants but also that they were envisaged as children, not as would-be adults.

All this material, derived from a wide range of primary and secondary sources, cumulatively suggests that medieval attitudes towards infant mortality were more complex, subtle, and emotional than modern scholars have frequently suggested.
The British Museum has in its huge collection a miniature painting in bodycolour, watercolour and gold leaf on vellum by the Dutch artist Joris Hoefnagel, dating from 1598 (plate 1). Described as an allegory on life and death, it shows a healthy and rosy-looking infant seated in a landscape near a tree and a blooming rosebush while resting his small hands on an hour-glass and a skull. This little oval vignette is surrounded by a border almost in the illusionistic late-medieval Ghent-Bruges style, but here strewn with emblems of mortality, including a dead frog and mouse, a scorpion, five cut roses, a maggot, a snail, a caterpillar, two chrysalis-like shapes and a variety of butterflies and other insects.

The message of this little work seems fairly obvious. Already in Antiquity the butterfly emerging from its chrysalis was used as a symbol for the soul departing from the body; Christian art adopted the caterpillar as a symbol for the resurrected human soul. Hoefnagel shows the caterpillar as an early stage in the life of a butterfly and the chrysalis as the intermediate stage; together they form the traditional cycle of life, death and resurrection. The venomous scorpion epitomizes death and the maggot is closely associated with corruption of the body, as are flies and beetles, while two of the five rose-heads seem to be wilting. The charmingly drawn little mouse in the bottom left-hand corner would have had not only a negative reputation as vermin but also a long association with evil. The frog, whose sprawling pose almost seems to mirror the upright posture of the little infant above, was a favourite motif in medieval death imagery, featuring both as an element in the corruption of the human corpse in tomb monuments and as a horrifying ingredient in the tortures of the damned right through to the hell scenes

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1 Measuring 168 x 237 mm, it was bequeathed to the British Museum by Mrs Rosi Schilling through the National Art Collections Fund. For Hoefnagel and an emblematic interpretation of his work, see Th A G Wilberg Vignau-Schuurman, *Die emblematischen Elemente im Werke Joris Hoefnagels* (Leiden, 1969) 2 vols; the BM miniature could only be described by the author in vol. 1, 230, on the basis of an auction catalogue entry from 1887, subsequent whereabouts then being unknown.


3 For the mouse, see *LCI*, vol. 3, 234-35, and also Mayer Schapiro, "Muscipula diaboli": The Symbolism of the Merode Altarpiece, *Art Bulletin* 27 (1945) 182-87, for its specifically Christian symbolism in Robert Campin's painting.
painted by Hieronymus Bosch in the early sixteenth century. The skull and the hour-glass need no explanation as symbols of death, of course, whereas the flowering rosebush and the chubby putto-like boy simply look a picture of health and life - or do they?

In Hoefnagel's work the rose was usually another symbol of vanitas; whereas the bud might symbolize hope, the flower was soon destined to wilt and die. The fragile and transitory nature of roses is already indicated in the border surrounding the vignette, of course, but the shy infant is more ambiguous, looking like the popular putto yet lacking its wings; while, as a child, he may appear to be the epitome of health and youth with a whole life ahead of him, contemporary mortality rates meant that infants might be just as ephemeral as roses in the late sixteenth century and the original viewers would undoubtedly have been aware of this. The eight infant 'chrysoms' among the four living sons and six living daughters at the foot end of the alabaster effigial slab on the tomb of Francis Tanfield (d. 1558) and his wife at Gayton (Northamptonshire) are a vivid illustration of the losses suffered by some families. It was also in the sixteenth century that deceased children started to make an appearance in family portraits as naked little putti floating in the sky above their still living parents and siblings; as we shall see, this was seen as part of a changing attitude of parents towards their children by the French historian Philippe Ariès, many of whose ideas are even now disputed by scholars.

Although medical progress in this century has greatly reduced the risk of infant mortality in the western world, the image of the ephemeral infant is still pertinent for not only are babies often the worst affected victims of war and famine in developing countries but they also tend to be the most vulnerable group in

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4 See, for example, Janetta Rebold Benton, *The Medieval Menagerie: Animals in the Art of the Middle Ages* (New York, 1992) 110, 111, 113 and 169. Frogs are also to be found as unclean instruments of decay on medieval tomb effigies such as that of Francis I de La Sarra (died 1362) in the chapel of La Sarraz (Vaud); see Erwin Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture: Its Changing Aspects from Ancient Egypt to Bernini*, edited by H W Janson (London, 1992) pls 257-58.


6 I am preparing a paper on such 'chrysom' effigies in English tomb iconography for publication.

7 See Philippe Ariès, *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime* (1960), translated as *Centuries of Childhood* (1962, repr. Harmondsworth, 1986). Ariès, p. 43, quoted the naked infant in Holbein's Darmstadt or Meyer Madonna as one of the earliest examples; see also John Rowlands, *Holbein: The Paintings of Hans Holbein the Younger - complete edition* (Oxford, 1985) cat. 23, colour plates 8-10. According to Rowlands, 64, the painting was probably commissioned by Jacob Meyer in 1526 or slightly earlier and altered in 1528; it includes Meyer's deceased first wife, who had died in 1511, his second wife and only surviving child Anna, and next to Meyer himself his two sons, who probably died young.
epidemics and outbreaks of food poisoning in the West. In this vulnerability, infants are like the aged whose frailty leaves them equally vulnerable to infections; together, just as in the once popular image of the Ages of Man, they represent both ends of the scale of human existence.

The image of the infant has long been one of both hope and concern, a human being who may either have a whole life ahead of him or who may be snatched away by an early death. Archetypally dependent and vulnerable, infants were to be presented in Christian art and literature as the first innocent martyrs in the Massacre at Bethlehem; in order for the Christ child to live, the mothers of Bethlehem were to suffer the loss of all male infants under the age of two, according to the story in Matthew. The wide spread of this theme in early Christian and medieval culture would have reinforced an awareness about infant death and may in turn have inspired the inclusion of the infant in the danse macabre or Dance of Death, which was to make its appearance by the later fourteenth century to become hugely popular in the next. Although the cult of the Holy Innocents reached its zenith in the fifteenth century, the Massacre remained a favourite subject among artists well after the Middle Ages just as infants continued to prove vulnerable in real life and parents remained wary or resigned; post-medieval infant mortality is probably nowhere more poignantly illustrated than by the thirteen small infant tombs of the Baker and Comport families in the churchyard at Cooling (Kent).8

This dissertation is a study of images and ideas ranging across a wide area of north-west Europe, and through a long period of time. It will consider the ways in which infants were presented in medieval culture (chapters 2 and 3), as well as the representation of infant death, in particular in the Massacre of the Innocents (chapter 4) and the Dance of Death (chapter 5), in north-western European culture. The Massacre dates back in art to as early as the fourth century while the danse macabre is a late-medieval development that was to spread across Europe to become one of the lasting icons of the medieval preoccupation with death. The historiography and the interpretative problems of image of 'the medieval child', and in particular the infant, will be discussed in the Introduction (chapter 1).

Inevitably with such a vast topic, it is impossible to strive for completeness; the Massacre of the Innocents alone would provide myriads of images in all kinds of media. In addition, many aspects of infancy and childhood - such as conception, birth, nursing and education - have already been dealt with by other

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8 The graves belong to three children of the Baker family, who died in 1837 and 1854 at the ages of one, three and five months, while none of the remaining ten Comport infants (born between 1767 and 1800) appear to have lived longer than seventeen months, according to the names, dates and ages specified on a list inside the church. These tombs were the inspiration for those of Pip's dead siblings in Charles Dickens' novel Great Expectations, published in 1860-61.
authors. Instead, this dissertation is aimed at analysing a selection of familiar and lesser-known sources from a wide range of media and literature, and presenting a critical synthesis of these findings; by studying a number of themes common to different periods and cultures, I have sought to present a wider picture of the infant as a medieval 'icon', the object of both affection and concern. Primary sources and visual material will be placed in a wider context to produce an interdisciplinary overview.9 The resulting historical and cultural picture of the medieval infant will provide an important contrast with the often made claims that the young child was simply considered too vulnerable and unimportant to warrant interest or emotional attachment in the Middle Ages. The focus is primarily on English culture, but the inclusion of continental material will offer wider comparanda to illustrate a theme that runs across the boundaries of time and place. Whatever the differences and developments through time, care about one's offspring - whether as a means of biological and dynastic continuation or as an object of affection in itself - seems a natural human constant. However grim many of the scenes discussed here, they will be shown to stem from a deeply felt concern on the part of medieval adults and, when viewed in their proper context, will help us obtain a clearer idea of our past.

9 Wherever necessary, translations of Latin, Middle-Dutch, Middle-French and Middle-German texts will be provided in footnotes. Spelling and typography of the editions used will be maintained here.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is the result not just of many years of research on my part but also of the help and support I have received from others. I owe a great debt to Miss Miriam Gill whose generous help, suggestions and information have been invaluable, and to Mr Peter Kerssemakers not just for supplying books and references but also for his encouragement and hospitality in putting his enviably rich library at my disposal. I am grateful to Dr Phillip Lindley for the opportunity to start my PhD research and for his supervision, especially in the crucial last stage. Dr James Binns has been extremely helpful in providing some of the Latin translations; Mr Tobias Kemper has assisted me in a similar way with information on and translations of Middle-German sources, and Dr Stewart Gregory helped me with some of the Middle-French material. The discussions and correspondence I had with Dr Jenny Wakely have been essential in helping me understand some of the anatomical and archaeological implications. Over the years, the interest and confidence in my work shown by various scholars have been a great stimulation, and I should particularly like to thank Miss Sally Badham, Miss Sarah Brown, Mrs Carol Chattaway, Professor Dr Claudine Chavannes-Mazel, Dr Cecil Clough, Dr Isabelle Cochelin, Professor Clifford Davidson, Dr Graham Jones, Mr Philip Lankester, Dr David Postles and Dr Shearer West. Discussions with students attending my courses and lectures on the presentation of the child in western art have also been very inspiring. Furthermore, I have benefitted greatly from contacts with other members of the Medieval-Religion internet discussion list. I gratefully acknowledge the help I have received from librarians and library assistants at various institutions; I should especially like to name Mr Peter Woodhead and also the staff at the Inter Library Loans desk at the University of Leicester. My family and friends in Holland and elsewhere have been very supportive and patient, and I am particularly grateful to my nephew Daan and niece Margot for reminding me of the nature of infantia. Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank my partner, Dr Dick Visser, for his stubborn faith in me; without his support and perseverance, this dissertation might never have been written.
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# List of Abbreviations

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<tr>
<td>BL</td>
<td>British Library (London)</td>
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<tr>
<td>BN</td>
<td>Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Paris)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EDAM</td>
<td>Early Drama, Art, and Music</td>
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<tr>
<td>EETS</td>
<td>Early English Text Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>e.s.</td>
<td>extra series</td>
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<tr>
<td>LCI</td>
<td>Engelbert Kirschbaum's <em>Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>new series</td>
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<tr>
<td>OED</td>
<td>Oxford English Dictionary</td>
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<tr>
<td>o.s.</td>
<td>original series</td>
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<tr>
<td>s.s.</td>
<td>supplementary series</td>
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<tr>
<td>STS</td>
<td>Scottish Text Society</td>
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<td>VCH</td>
<td>Victoria County History</td>
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Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION:

'Hayll, lytyll tyne mop!'¹

For before the historian can try to make valid use of a visual source, however undemanding, however simple, he has to know what he is looking at, whether it is authentic, when and for what purpose it was made, even whether it was considered beautiful.²

The majority of books on the history of childhood and the family start off with the early modern, rather than the medieval period;³ the later period certainly offers historians better documentation and the very term 'early modern' carries an additional note of progress and civilization closer to our own standards. In contrast, the term 'medieval' can have quite pejorative connotations in modern English, often equating 'barbaric'.⁴ This attitude is not a new one for renaissance Italy already saw the Middle Ages as a dark, barbaric period between the glorious Roman past and its own time. Similarly, many people in the late twentieth century, when considering the past, are apt to consider the Middle Ages as much more 'medieval' in this pejorative sense than any other age; the image is often one of squalor, superstition, war, famine, epidemics and general ignorance. The reality of medieval life was undoubtedly harsh for most people, but perhaps never more so than for infants and children. As T S R Boase stated quite succinctly, 'the heavy toll of infantile mortality exercised a natural selection for the survival of the fittest'.⁵

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¹ Words of the second shepherd to the newborn Christ child in the Towneley (or Wakefield) Second Shepherds' Play, l. 1046. The OED explains 'mop' in this particular context as 'a playful term for a baby' (moppet) although in an earlier quotation from 1440, 'moppe, or popyne', it apparently refers to a rag doll. See Sophie Oosterwijk, 'Of Mops and Puppets: The Ambiguous Use of the Word 'Mop' in the Towneley Shepherds' Plays', Notes and Queries 242 (June 1997a) 169-71; also Nicholas Orme, 'The Culture of Children in Medieval England', Past and Present 148 (1995) 51-52 and 56-58.


⁴ See the discussion of similar connotations of the word middeleeuws in modern Dutch culture in Jozef Janssens, De middeleeuwen zijn anders: Cultuur en literatuur van de 12de tot de 15de eeuw, Historische reeks/Davidsfonds 12 (Louvain, 1993) esp. chapter II.1.

Of course, such a 'heavy toll of infantile mortality' presupposes a large presence of infants and children in medieval society, however short-lived they might prove to be. Yet what evidence is there about the reality of medieval life for infants and children? History deals mainly with adults, and then mostly with those few who were in a position to make themselves historically noteworthy. Children usually remain invisible until they can play their roles as adults; those who failed to survive childhood are frequently omitted from genealogical tables as historically of scant importance. Hence one may find king Charles VIII of France succinctly described as having died childless in 1498 because his two sons by Anne of Brittany predeceased him; Charles Orland, who died just over three years old in 1495, and his baby brother Charles, who died after less than a month in 1496, may briefly have held the title of dauphin but historically they played no other role and the most lasting evidence of their brief existence is their joint tomb in the cathedral of Tours.

Children rarely appear in their own right, and if they do, it is often under exceptional circumstances over which they themselves have no control. One type of image that springs to mind is that of the two coronation ceremonies of Henry VI (born 6 December 1421) on 6 November 1429 at Westminster Abbey and on 2 December 1431 at Saint Denis, as depicted in the drawings in the Pageant of the Birth, Life and Death of Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick (BL Cotton MS Julius E IV) or in illuminated chronicles such as Jehan de Waurin's Recueil des Chroniques de Grand Bretagne: on the basis of such pictures, it would be easy to imagine a terrified little boy looking like a miniature king while undergoing a ceremony which he himself might barely have understood. These images appear to present just another example of the ways in which children were used by adults as pawns for their political games in the Middle Ages; a period which, as far as children go, popular opinion nowadays is apt to associate with such horrors as child marriage, oblation, fosterage and a very early entry into service or the workforce - a time when society did not hold a special place or regard for children and their needs. One scholar summarized his view of the past thus:

The history of childhood is a nightmare from which we have only recently begun to awaken. The further back in history one goes, the lower the level of child care, and the more likely children are to be killed, abandoned, beaten, terrorized, and sexually abused.6

6 Lloyd deMause, 'The Evolution of Childhood' in Lloyd deMause (ed.), The History of Childhood: The Evolution of Parent-Child Relationships as a Factor in History (1974, repr. London, 1980) 1: almost the same sentences were used by deMause at the start of his speech 'The History of Childhood' given at the National Parenting Conference in Boulder, Colorado, on 25 September 1997, the text of which was subsequently posted to the history-child-family internet discussion list.
Yet would such a sentimental interpretation of these depictions of Henry VI's coronations have agreed with the artists' intentions; did the artists really mean to depict a terrified child, or were they more concerned with the importance of the two ceremonies? The fact that Henry was first and foremost a royal heir is evident even in the drawing of his birth in the same Pageant manuscript (BL Cotton MS Julius E IV, f. 25) where both the newly delivered mother and her little swaddled son are depicted wearing crowns.7 The text above the Pageant's drawing of Henry's coronation as king of England mentions his 'tendre age' - he was not yet eight years old - and the artist has taken care to make him look like a child in adult robes, dwarfed by the adult courtiers surrounding him; apparently, St Edward's crown proved too heavy for the little king although he otherwise played his part quite well for a child his age.8 But if his contemporaries felt any pity for the child, not a few pitied the country at the same time, mindful of the famous words 'Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes eat in the morning' - a text that was to be quoted by many during Henry's reign.9

These drawings, however, do not represent an eye-witness account but were made some sixty years after the event to illustrate not the life of the king but that of Richard Beauchamp, earl of Warwick, who had become the young king's tutor in 1428. In fact, if we look at another drawing of the earl in the 'Rous Roll' (BL Add. MS 48976, f. 957), we see him lightly carrying the little crowned and sceptred king on his left arm;10 an image which tells us less about the child Henry than about the powerful royal tutor and his line. It is evident that to treat the Pageant drawings of Henry's coronations as if they gave one direct access to the ceremonies would be extremely naive. Clearly, images of children in medieval art should be approached with caution if one wishes to use visual evidence to gain an understanding of the 'reality' of childhood in the Middle Ages. A crucial question is what one imagines this reality to have been, and so what one is searching for in medieval art: whether familiar-looking pictures that will provide a recognizable image of medieval childhood, or evidence that will prove how utterly different this must have been from any modern concept of childhood. Many historians have

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7 Queen Catherine was apparently assisted in her delivery by the presence of the sacred relic of Christ's foreskin, judged efficacious in helping women in childbirth, which had been specially brought over from France; see Bertram Wolfe, Henry VI (London, 1981) 27-28.
8 Wolfe (1981) 49; Wolfe, 48, compared Henry's performance to that of Richard II in 1377 who at the age of ten had been so exhausted by his coronation ceremony that he had to be carried to Westminster Hall for his banquet afterwards. See also Nigel Saul, Richard II, Yale English Monarchs (New Haven/London, 1997) 24-26 and 310, for an account of Richard II's coronation.
10 Compare also the drawing in BL Cotton MS Julius E IV 6, f. 23, of Richard Beauchamp taking up his post as knightly master of the seven-year-old Henry VI, who is represented as a small figure on the earl's right arm; see plate 4 in Nicholas Orme, From Childhood to Chivalry: The Education of the English Kings and Aristocracy 1066-1530 (London/New York, 1984).
simply deployed visual images as illustrations to help 'set the scene' or to buttress their own (tendentious) theories. In this study, a wide range of primary sources - both verbal and visual - will be combined to obtain a more subtle and sophisticated evidential base and to help analyse the presentation of the *infans* in medieval culture against the historiographical background.

**THE DISCOVERY OF A 'HISTORY OF CHILDHOOD'**

In 1960 Philippe Ariès published his still controversial book *L'Enfant et la vie familiale sous l'Ancien Régime*, which appeared in an English translation two years later.\(^1\) Ariès claimed to have based his ideas very much on art and iconography from the early medieval period onwards, and although his discussion tends to focus on the post-medieval period his often sweeping comments about childhood in the Middle Ages have been highly influential and, to a certain extent, remain widely accepted:

> In medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist; this is not to suggest that children were neglected, forsaken or despised. The idea of childhood is not to be confused with affection for children: it corresponds to an awareness of the particular nature of childhood, that particular nature which distinguishes the child from the adult, even the young adult. In medieval society, this awareness was lacking. That is why, as soon as the child could live without the constant solicitude of his mother, his nanny or his child-rocker he belonged to adult society.\(^1\)

It is interesting that Ariès' view of medieval childhood is not as bleak as the nightmarish picture painted by some authors although there is always an ambivalence about his statements; for example, although there is no outright rejection of the idea of medieval affection for children, he did feel that the high mortality rates amongst medieval children were bound to influence parents' attitudes towards their offspring. Resignation in the face of the inevitable would thus have been the typical medieval feeling, according to Ariès, for 'people could not allow themselves to become too attached to something that was regarded as a probable loss'.\(^1\) This view seems to be confirmed by the words of the Doctor at the end of the Middle-English Brome play of *Abraham and Isaac*:

> And thys women that wepe so sorowfully
> Whan that hyr chyldryn dey them froo,
> As nater woll, and kynd;
> Yt ys but folly, I may wyll awooe,
> To groche a3ens God or to greve 3ow [...]\(^1\)

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\(^1\) References here will be to the 1986 Peregrine reprint of *Centuries of Childhood*.
\(^2\) Ariès (1986) 123.
\(^3\) Ariès (1986) 37.
Yet here we find a curious contradiction: if resignation in the face of child death was the typical medieval response, why should there be moral warnings against such 'sorrowful weeping'? In other words, rather than corroborating Ariès' view, this customary warning against mourning the death of children actually confirms the fact that this was normal parental behaviour in real life.

Ariès was not the first to voice the idea of parental resignation, if not detachment or downright indifference, in earlier times although he did give it authority by apparently providing the reasons for such an attitude. Already in 1907, Elizabeth Godfrey wrote:

> Because children are so rarely and so briefly mentioned in old chronicles, some have fancied they must have been looked on with indifference. Not so: childhood in itself, it may be, was made less of than now; but it was because of the eagerness of our forefathers about their offspring, not their indifference; they were not content to prolong the days of dandling the baby; they wanted to see stalwart sons ready to follow them into the field, fair daughters early ripe to be matched with bold sons-in-law. Truly, in those far-off days, 'Like as the arrows in the hand of the giant, even so were the young children.'

It is curious that this excerpt seems so different from, and at the same time so similar to Ariès' view quoted earlier, for whereas Godfrey firmly believed in parental affection she also recognized that medieval parents were not likely to sentimentalize childhood as such, preferring instead to see their sons and daughters grow up quickly into healthy and useful adults. Parental affection was seen by Godfrey as a historical constant, however different parents' ways of showing it, or as L F Salzman saw it in 1926: 'human nature has changed very little since the earliest times - the nature of children as little as that of their elders - though the methods of dealing with it, encouraging good and repressing evil tendencies, which is the purpose of education, have altered'.

In itself, then, Ariès' notion of a 'history of childhood' was not altogether new when he published his book in 1960. However, Ariès was crucial in proposing a *discovery* of childhood, *i.e.* the idea that there was not always 'an awareness of the particular nature of childhood' but that adults in history became only gradually aware of the special nature of childhood and its own distinct needs. For Ariès this process was not a smooth one for he observed different developments and attitudes from Antiquity up to the twentieth century; as his methods comprise not just the study of education and religion but also art and iconography, it is hardly surprising that he at times propounded rather questionable

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15 Elizabeth Godfrey, *English Children in the Olden Time* (London, 1907) 1-2. Sentimental in its stance, this book has been generally ignored by later authors on childhood although it contains some interesting material.

generalizations and left himself open to attack from all sides and disciplines. All the same, medieval childhood does not emerge from his book as a period of utter misery; in some ways Ariès seems to have preferred this era - in which childhood was supposedly not recognized as a separate stage of life and children were part of adult society - to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in which children as a distinct group were forced to undergo rigorous discipline and suppression not only at school but also at home. Ironically, it is in the early modern period that Ariès first observed a growing number of interior and family scenes in art - evidence to him of a growing interest in family life which was to develop into the modern nuclear family.

Ariès's book has remained a pioneering work, even though both his methodology and his conclusions have been condemned by some as 'badly flawed'. It is hard to find recent publications on childhood in history that do not include a discussion of his work. The idea of parental indifference towards children in earlier times has proved remarkably persistent among the public at large and has been accepted unquestioningly by some authors. While Ariès was crucial in opening up new avenues for the study of childhood, some of those avenues were to run in very different directions. Although Ariès had been careful not to deny completely the idea of parental affection in his early history of childhood, these avenues were to run in very different directions.

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19 See, for example, Barbara W Tuchman in her bestseller A Distant Mirror: The Calamitous 14th Century (1978, repr. Harmondsworth, 1980) 52:

On the whole, babies and young children appear to have been left to survive or die without great concern in the first five or six years. What psychological effect this may have had on character, and possibly on history, can only be conjectured. Possibly the relative emotional blankness of a medieval infancy may account for the casual attitude toward life and suffering of the medieval man.

Dulcie M Ashdown in Royal Children (London, 1979) 15, also claimed that

In the Middle Ages, childhood was a period to be hurried through, to be left as soon as possible. [...] No one was sentimental about children in the Middle Ages, nor was child development thought to be of much interest, so the subject rarely figures in contemporary works.
childhood, some researchers completely rejected this, most notably Elisabeth Badinter in her book *L'amour en plus* published in 1980; in it she proposed the theory that the maternal instinct is not a natural given but rather a socially conditioned phenomenon that may vary according to the customs of any given period. Admittedly, Badinter focussed mainly on the pre-modern period from the eighteenth century on but she also occasionally included earlier periods in her discussions.

It is interesting to note that it is often the attitude towards and treatment of *infants* throughout history that determines the author's stance, not just Badinter's but also that of other writers; Badinter was not the only one to use the practice of wetnursing in support of her claim that the maternal instinct might be lacking, with high infant mortality rates as a result. The idea of social circumstances was also a factor observed by Edward Shorter in 1975; agreeing with Ariès that 'maternal indifference to infants characterized traditional society', Shorter believed that whereas this attitude might have started to change among the upper classes by the sixteenth century, it was to prove more tenacious amongst the 'ordinary people' who are the main concern in his book, with particular focus on the post-medieval period. Again it is the attitude of the mother towards the dependent and vulnerable infant that is considered crucial: 'while a residual affection between mother and child - the product of a biological link - has always existed, there was a change in the priority which the infant occupied in the mother's rational hierarchy of values'. In Shorter's view, there was a clear improvement in attitude when mothers came to see their infants' welfare as the most important object of their lives; those who did not put their infants' welfare before all else were not necessarily monsters but they failed the 'sacrifice test'. Very much in line with Ariès' ideas, Shorter considered the ability to 'empathize' with infants and children to be crucial. Whereas Ariès saw shifting attitudes towards children through time, others prefer to see a more consistently developing 'history of childhood', most notably the 'psychohistorical' school of thought; its founder, Lloyd deMause, proposed an 'evolution of child-rearing modes' from infanticidal in Antiquity via an abandoning mode which in the course of the later medieval period changed into an ambivalent mode, culminating in the helping mode from the mid-twentieth century

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21 See especially Badinter (1981) chapter 3 on 'Maternal Indifference'.
23 Shorter (1979) 14.
on. Although the proposed evolution to increasingly positive attitudes towards children is idealistic, if not at the same time almost presumptuous, it also presupposes that attitudes must have been worse the further back into history one goes; hence there is a risk that the search for evidence to support such a rigid theory may become a biased or even blinkered one. Evidence of cruelty and neglect is never hard to find, as has been shown by various studies of medieval coroners’ rolls or miracle reports, which can offer a rather depressing view of medieval childhood with their stories of children mauled by wandering pigs, burnt in their cradles or left to drown through lack of attendance; however, as one historian admitted, such sources are really about crises in childhood and thus likely to paint a rather one-sided picture.

Affection for, or empathy with, infants and children is hard to determine yet the idea of their absence or presence greatly determines the general view of any given period. It is hardly surprising that the majority of works on family history concentrate on the early modern period as they often rely on the evidence of letters and diaries - data which are scarce and/or unreliable for the medieval period where researchers often have to depend on different types of evidence. However, parental affection is not only a favourite topic for debate amongst modern researchers but also concerned people in the Middle Ages themselves. Many studies on the subject of medieval (English) childhood quote the famous report home by a Venetian envoy in the late fifteenth century:

The want of affection in the English is strongly manifested towards their children; for after having kept them at home till they arrive at the age of seven or nine years at the utmost, they put them out, both males and females, to hard service in the houses of other people, binding them generally for another seven or nine years. And these are called apprentices, and during that time they perform the most menial offices; and few are born who are exempted from this fate, for everyone, however rich he may be, sends away his children into the houses of others, whilst he, in return, receives those of strangers into his own. And on enquiring the reason for this severity, they answered that they did it in order that their children learn better manners. But I, for my part, believe that they do it because they like to enjoy all their comforts themselves, and that they are better served by strangers than they would be by their own children.

24 deMause (1980) 51ff and table 3, which also includes the intrusive and socializing modes prior to the helping mode.
25 See in particular the work by Barbara A Hanawalt quoted in the Bibliography, e.g. her book Growing up in Medieval London: The Experience of Childhood in History (Oxford, 1993) 156. Hanawalt’s work is based very much on medieval documents such as coroners’ inquests as well as orphanage and apprenticeship records, which offer very interesting insights; for example, the often voiced criticisms in coroners’ rolls about child deaths due to negligence on the part of carers in themselves suggest quite the reverse of indifference towards children. The town records of Ghent used by David Nicholas in his book The Domestic Life of a Medieval City: Women, Children and the Family in Fourteenth-Century Ghent (Lincoln/London, 1985) also indicate concern for children amongst both relatives and town magistrates.
Whatever else the Venetian envoy might have intended with his report, or the nature of Venetian attitudes towards children, are questions that are often not addressed in discussions of this excerpt. In any case, the institution of apprenticeships was not uniquely English; the fact that Christine de Pisan sent her son Jean to England in 1397 to serve as a page with John Montagu Earl of Salisbury did not mean that such an apprenticeship was not to be found for him in France. Yet it is true that, in general, medieval children experienced a transition from the care of women to a place in the adult world, whether in education or apprenticeships, around the age of seven; in some schemes of the Ages of Man, this constituted the change from **infantia** to **pueritia** as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Medieval moralists were also apt to form their own conclusions about parental behaviour in their own time. The medieval Bestiary compares the attitude of human parents quite unfavourably with the behaviour of animals, such as the crow:

By contrast, our women wean human children as soon as they can, even if they love them; and if the children are troublesome, they show a real aversion to breastfeeding them. If they are poor they throw out their babies and expose them, and if they are found, deny all knowledge of them. Even the rich would rather kill the child in the womb for fear that their lands should be divided into many parts, and use murderous juices to extinguish the concealed pledges of their love; they are more ready to take life away than to give it. Who apart from mankind denies their offspring? What other creature has such harsh treatment from its father?

Interestingly, it is the human attitude to foetuses and infants that is specifically targeted here, with curiously modern overtones; one can almost read echoes of contemporary claims about the loss of family values by modern politicians and family critics, not to mention anti-abortion campaigners in the United States whose visual and verbal manipulation of the foetus as a sentient victimized person is a striking example of emotional propaganda. Even fish do better than mankind, according to the Bestiary, for 'what human love can compare with the compassion of fishes?' Unlike humans, the Mugil or Grey Mullet is said to behave like the ideal caring parent and the message becomes clear:

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29 For the appearance and use of the foetus in western art and in propaganda, see Karen Newman, *Fetal Positions: Individualism, Science, Visuality* (Stanford, 1996) who describes, 21, the presentation of abortion by right-wing activists as 'a modern slaughter of the innocents'.
30 This eulogy of fishes can be found in another translation of the *Bestiary* by T H White, *The Book of Beasts, Being a Translation from a Latin Bestiary of the Twelfth Century* (1954, repr. London, 1969) 204.
Man, you have taught children the renunciation of their fathers, you have taught them separations, hatreds and enmity. Now learn what the relationship of parents and children could be. Fishes do not seek to live without Water, to be separated from the fellowship of their parents, to be parted from the nourishment of the mother. It is nature that, if separated from the sea, they die immediately.\(^3\)

It is obvious, then, that the *Bestiary* should not be used as straightforward evidence about the state of medieval family life or the attitudes of parents towards their children. The writer singing the praises of crows' or mullets' parental care in the *Bestiary* was not necessarily describing the everyday reality of medieval childhood but rather painting the bleakest possible picture in order to draw a moral from his example - which is what the *Bestiary* is really about.

There is always a danger in using isolated excerpts or images outside their context as historically reliable evidence. The *Bestiary* writer may be scathing about the conduct of human parents in the above two instances yet at the same time he could also eulogize human mothers whose attitudes appear so abhorrent to him elsewhere. In the description of the nightingale his description of human maternal behaviour is, in fact, quite sentimental:

> The weak yet virtuous woman who carried a heavy stone lest her children should lack bread and nourishment, and tried to soften the harsh lot of poverty by her nightly songs, imitated the nightingale; even if she could not rival the sweetness of its song, she equalled its maternal devotion.\(^32\)

Whereas, on the one hand, there must have been a grain of truth in the *Bestiary*’s earlier damning account of human parents in order for his moral to have struck a chord with medieval readers, on the other hand one clearly finds the loving and caring bond between the mother and her children quoted as the ideal standard of behaviour. This means that the concept of maternal affection and solicitude, at least, was not unknown, even though to many it may have been an unattainable ideal under the harsh conditions of everyday life. Of course, the existence of such an ideal standard of maternal behaviour is hardly surprising in a period when the Virgin and Child were emerging as the most popular devotional image.

> Literature such as the *Bestiary* can obviously not be used as factual historical evidence in the same way as diaries or letters. Whether it is justifiable at all to use literary works - be it religious, moralistic or even courtly - in order to discover the nature of medieval childhood depends on the author's understanding of the nature of such texts. In his study of childhood as presented in medieval German

\(^{31}\) White (1969) 206.

\(^{32}\) Barber (1993) 158.
literature, Schultz claimed that 'literary texts are less an embarrassing necessity required by the lack of other material than essential, perhaps even privileged sources of information', not only because literary texts help us to understand the 'culturally constructed meaning of childhood' but also because they 'are themselves part of the historical knowledge of childhood', both relying on that knowledge in order to be intelligible and providing models for behaviour. He did point out, however, that many contributors to the childhood debate clearly started out with their own preconceptions and found only what they wanted to find. Thus, Ariès looked for a modern concept of childhood in earlier periods and, not finding the modern concept, concluded that there was no concept of childhood at all. On the other hand, sentimentalists (such as Godfrey or Salzman quoted above) 'look at the past and find the present' because they rely on the premise that 'present and past are the same'. Schultz recognized two important paradigms for the historiography of medieval childhood: some see childhood as 'primarily a historical phenomenon, but a very recent one' while others regard it primarily as 'a natural phenomenon, governed by immutable laws'. According to him, not just the sentimentalists but also many psychological historians, like Shahar, and 'revisionists' (critics of the idea that there is a real difference between past and present attitudes), like Le Roy Ladurie or Hanawalt, merely 'look at the records of the past and discover there the image of the present'. Therefore, one's preconceptions may determine how one reads a text, or even what one reads into it. The same is true for the visual arts.

CONTEXT AND INTERPRETATION

It will be clear from Schultz's distinction between the two paradigms mentioned above that the same data can be interpreted in very different ways, depending on one's attitude towards childhood in history. This is why context is so crucial for interpretation; not just in its narrowest sense as the wider context of literary excerpts but also the context of culture and society as a whole. As we have seen, a single excerpt from the Bestiary might be used quite effectively to support one's

34 Jerome Kroll, 'The Concept of Childhood in the Middle Ages', Journal of the History of Behavioral Sciences 13 (1977) 384-93, offered evidence from a range of medieval monastic, legal and medical sources to refute Ariès' claim and conclude 'that children were viewed and treated differently than adults, and that this reflected a conceptual difference, an awareness of a specialness of childhood'.
37 Schultz (1995) 8. Shulamith Shahar's book Childhood in the Middle Ages (transl., 1990, repr. London/New York, 1992) had as its opening sentence: 'The central thesis of this book is that a concept of childhood existed in the Central and Late Middle Ages, that scholarly acknowledgement of the existence of several stages of childhood was not merely theoretical, and that parents invested both material and emotional resources in their offspring'. For Hanawalt's various books and articles on different aspects of medieval childhood and family life, see the Bibliography.
claims about inadequate parenting in the Middle Ages but only if one chooses to ignore its context and the moralistic nature of the whole book. Similarly, a study of coroners' inquests might seem to offer factual and reliable evidence about the cruelties and neglect inflicted upon medieval infants but, as Hanawalt herself admitted, such documents actually chronicle exceptional crises in everyday life - not the common reality.

It is striking, when one reads studies on the history of childhood, how the same examples, case studies and anecdotes, make their appearance over and over again, the report of the Venetian envoy being but one such example. Another example of a supposedly indifferent attitude of medieval parents towards their children is the chronicle description of Edward I's reaction while on crusade at hearing the news of the deaths of first his son John and then of his father, king Henry III of England. According to the chronicler, Edward grieved far more for his 64-year-old father than for his five-year-old son and, when asked to explain the reason, he replied that the loss of a child is easier to bear as one may have many more children, but that the loss of a father is irremediable. This has often been taken as the typical medieval response at the death of a child; indeed, Edward himself was due to experience such losses all too often, for only six of the (probably) fourteen children he had by his first wife Eleanor of Castile reached adulthood. However, what has often been overlooked is the fact that Edward's reaction, instead of being typical, was in fact seen as unusual even if proper and devout; the episode illustrates surprise at his behaviour both on the part of Charles of Anjou, who asked him to explain it, and on the part of the chronicler, who considered it significant enough to record. Although it may have been exemplary of Edward to mourn so much more for the death of his aged father (which actually made him the new king) than for his own little son, it seems at the same time to have been considered far from normal. Taken out of this context, however, modern interpretations of this excerpt are often quite different.

Yet another famous anecdote from the early life of William Marshal is often quoted as an example of parental indifference. The long Anglo-Norman chanson de geste about his life, commissioned by the earl’s eldest son after his death in

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38 Henry Thomas Riley (ed.), William Rishanger. Chronica et Annales, regnantibus Henrico Tertio et Edwardo Primo, Rolls Series 28, vol. 2 (London 1865) 78; although the chronicler names the son as Henry, it was actually John who died in 1271 a few months prior to his grandfather Henry III. The episode is quoted as a typical reaction in John Page-Phillips, Children on Brasses (London, 1970) 10.


40 See, for example, deMause (1980) 33, who saw the use of children as political hostages and security for debts as ‘another abandonment practice’ and as such not very different from sending one’s children away to serve in other households.
1219, contains an episode from the time of the civil war between Stephen and Matilda when William's father John Marshal decided to side with the latter. At one point during the conflict, when Stephen demanded guarantees from John Marshal on the surrender of the town of Newbury to the king, it was his little son William who became a royal hostage. However, John failed to keep his word and when the king threatened to hang the boy, the father's famous reply was that his son's life mattered little to him as he still had 'the hammer and the forge to produce another such, even finer'. Admittedly, William was only a fourth son but was his father's reply a typical example of parental indifference, or rather the desperately defiant response of a man who had weighed the pros and cons and who might even have hoped that the king would shrink from killing a child? One should bear in mind that the practice of surrendering one's own offspring as hostages had to be based on the assumption that no parent would want to risk the life of his own child; if parental indifference were the norm, then surely there was no point in demanding the sons of one's opponent as prime hostages. It should be remembered that not everyone dealt kindly with such child hostages; Stephen's uncle Henry I did not balk at having his own young hostage granddaughters blinded and mutilated when their mother, his bastard daughter Julienne, sided with her husband Eustache de Breteuil against her father in 1119. In contrast, William's story had a happy ending as Stephen could not bring himself to have the charming child killed and instead kept him in his own tent during the siege to play games of skill and chance with him which the boy, as a true epic hero, duly won. Of course, the story is a literary anecdote but it is interesting to note how the father's response is offset against the softheartedness of the king in the face of childish charm.

The last example is a short medieval chronicle report which was the subject of a contextualizing exercise by Daniel Kline; taken from the Corporation of London Letter Book G (f. 299) of c. 1352-74, it relates how on 21 March 1373 the beggarwoman Alice de Salesbury was condemned to one hour in the pillory as punishment for having stolen the grocer John Oxwyke's daughter Margaret to take her begging. The report is but brief and contains no information as to Margaret's

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41 This episode is discussed at some length in Georges Duby, Guillaume le Maréchal (1984), translated as William Marshal: The Flower of Chivalry (1985, repr. London/Boston, 1986) 62ff.
42 Duby (1986) 63.
43 This story is related in Georges Duby (ed.), Histoire de la vie privée: De l'Europe féodale à la Renaissance (1985), translated as A History of Private Life, vol. 2: Revelations of the Medieval World (Cambridge (Mass.)/London, 1988) 137-38; peace was finally concluded a few months later - in the name of kinship!
44 Daniel T Kline, 'Textuality, Subjectivity, and Violence: Theorizing the Figure of the Child in Middle English Literature' in Nicole Clifton (ed.), Children and the Family in the Middle Ages, Essays in Medieval Studies (proceedings of the annual meeting of the Illinois Medieval
age or her treatment by Alice other than that the latter stripped her of her clothes to avoid the child being recognized by her family; there is no mention of how long Alice kept the child or how she was found out. Kline, himself a literary scholar, discussed at great length how this brief incident compared with the often violent representation of children in Middle-English literature, the title of his paper already an indication of his special interest in three aspects of the story, i.e. subjectivity, violence and the question of how it can be used 'as the basis for theorizing the conflicted nature of the figure of the child in Middle English literature and culture'. For Kline, Margaret 'is transmuted through dress and disguise from her position in a wealthy family into a new relationship with a false mother' and he makes much of clothing as an indicator of social class, of 'the brief duration of the punishment, only one hour', and of 'the cultural constructs of age/youth and parent/child'. He concludes his study with the sweeping observation: 'The historical record shows us that children in the Middle English period were subjected to every form of violence we now recognize; similarly we know that these children were likewise nurtured and loved'. However, the actual chronicle report itself offers very little information to support any of this. As Margaret's age is unknown, we do not know whether she was a baby whose swaddling clothes would distinguish her as belonging to a wealthy family by the quality of their material, or whether she was an older child in girl's clothes who must have been threatened with violence to prevent her from seeking help. Likewise, there is no mention of the treatment she received from Alice, whether violent or not; the fact that Alice wanted a child to increase her income shows instead that, just like today, a mother and child evoke more pity in almsgivers than a single woman so that Margaret would have been a valuable commodity to Alice, as indicated by the risk she was prepared to run by stealing the child in the first place. Likewise, Kline offers no comparisons with the level of punishment for other crimes so that his observation on the 'brief duration' of her punishment is in itself unconfirmed; in fact, an hour as a child-stealer at the thewe (the London pillory for women) in daytime could have been not just humiliating but extremely unpleasant. How Margaret came to be stolen is another unanswerable question, just as we shall never know whether her recovery was due to her family's efforts or coincidence; she may well

Association: online journal) 12 (1996) paper 2. The story is found in Henry Thomas Riley (ed.), Memorials of London and London Life in the XIIIth, XIVth, and XVth Centuries, being a series of extracts, local, social, and political, from the early archives of the City of London A.D. 1276-1419 (London, 1868) 368, and also in G G Coulton, Social Life in Britain from the Conquest to the Reformation (Cambridge, 1918) 325.

47 Riley (1868) includes other examples of women condemned to the thewe, in one case (p. 367) for selling putrid soles and in another (pp. 385-86) for being a common scold.
have been loved, but the short report itself does not really offer proof of this. All in all, the above examples may serve to show that it is important to look at the wider context but that there is, on the other hand, a danger of over-contextualizing material beyond what it can really offer us in terms of historical or cultural evidence.

**The Use of Medieval Art and Culture as Historical Evidence**

If Schultz was right in claiming that literary texts may help us understand the 'culturally constructed meaning of childhood', then perhaps even more crucial for the interpretation of this concept and of medieval family life is the role of visual art. However, its use as historical evidence is even more open to varying interpretation than that of religious or secular literature; even those historians who draw more heavily on visual material often fail to properly identify or reference their sources, instead often using them simply as illustrations out of context. Nonetheless, Aries based many of his claims on the supposed evidence of visual material and, however flawed his methodology, the fact remains that art can greatly influence the way in which an historian views any given period; a prime example is that of the Dutch historian Johan Huizinga who earlier this century was inspired by the historical 1902 exhibition *Les primitifs flamands et l'art ancien* at Bruges to become a medieval historian, resulting in the 1919 publication of his famous book *Herfsttij der middeleeuwen*. Although Aries' pioneering book was published nearly forty years ago, a scrutiny of how he used art to support his theory will reveal many of the pitfalls and assumptions that one can still find in the works of his successors.

For a period which, in visual terms, may perhaps best be characterized by the omnipresence of the Virgin and Child, it seems surprising that children other than the Christ child appear to be almost completely absent in medieval art. Or, at least, that would seem to be the general view as expressed, for example, by the popular historian Barbara Tuchman:

> Of all the characteristics in which the medieval age differs from the modern, none is so striking as the comparative absence of interest in children. Emotion in relation to them rarely appears in art or literature or documentary evidence. The Christ child is of course repeatedly pictured, usually in his mother's arms, but prior to the mid-14th

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48 For example, the miniature on the front cover of the paperback edition of Shahar (1992) is only accompanied by an acknowledgement to the Bibliothèque Nationale; the often face-value interpretation of medieval illuminations in Danièle Alexandre-Bidon and Monique Closson, *L'enfant à l'ombre des cathédrales* (Lyon, 1985), will be discussed at greater length later.

49 Haskell (1993) chapter 15 on 'Huizinga and the "Flemish Renaissance"', esp. 468ff. Huizinga's book was translated into English as early as 1924 as *The Waning of the Middle Ages: A Study of the Forms of Life, Thought, and Art in France and the Netherlands in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* and has remained a classic.
century he is generally held stiffly, away from her body, by a mother who is aloof even when nursing. Or else the holy infant lies alone on the ground, swaddled or sometimes quite naked and uncovered, while an unsmiling mother gazes at him abstractedly. Her separateness from the child was meant to indicate his divinity. If the ordinary mother felt a warmer, more intimate emotion, it found small expression in medieval art because the attitudes of motherhood were preempted by the Virgin Mary.50

Tuchman's claim about this comparative absence of interest in children would seem to be supported by Lilian Randall's book *Images in the Margins of Gothic Manuscripts* for its index lists only fifteen entries for 'child', and then only in combinations with the Virgin, an ape, a dog, a beggar, a lion, etc.: an almost negligible number when compared to the numerous entries for 'woman' or 'man'.51 Of course, such entries are largely determined by the author's subjective decisions about what constitutes key aspects of these marginalia but identification - whether correct or incorrect - also plays a part. The subject index for the slide collection at the Bodleian Library includes a great many more entries for 'child' but the identification of figures as children can be open to misinterpretation; one might, for example, wish to question the inclusion of the little hooded figure with hairy legs in a twelfth-century English *Bestiary* manuscript, which might just as well represent a peasant or even a dwarf.52 The same ambiguity can be observed in the Hours of Jeanné de Navarre of c. 1329-36 (Paris, BN ms. nouv. acq. lat. 3145, f. 53), where amongst a group of musicians in the margin below an illuminated miniature of the Annunciation to the Shepherds there appears a little figure playing the drums, who in this context could just as easily be a dwarf as a child. In view of such seeming scarcity of images of medieval children, wishful thinking can also play a role, for example in the interpretation of the small marginal scene on f. 34 of a northern-French psalter of the late thirteenth century (Oxford, Bodleian MS Douce 118), which could well be a couple of mummers at work rather than children playing.53 Subject indices may instead lead one to images of children if one searches under different - and less ambiguous - headings such as 'cradle', or

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50 Tuchman (1980) 49.
51 Lilian M.C. Randall, *Images in the Margins of Gothic Manuscripts* (Berkeley/Los Angeles, 1966); these entries do not include childbirth or the Christ child. In comparison, the various entries for 'dog' fill six columns while 'goat' and 'cat' also far exceed the number of entries for 'child'.
52 Oxford, MS Bodley 602, f. 50. This image is included in the Bodleian Library web site <http://www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/imacat/img0006.jpg> with the caption: 'child carrying two sparrows, from a manuscript Bestiary: southern England, c. 1230'.
53 The Bodleian Library included this scene in a series of slides on games and toys with the ambiguous description: 'Hobby-horse; crowned woman dances with jester?' See also Sophie Oosterwijk, 'Kint ende kinne, man ende wijf. De plaats van het kind in de middeleeuwse kunst', *Madoc* 11:4 (December 1997b) 222 and pl. 11; notwithstanding my explicit reservations about this scene, the publishers still chose to feature this image on the front cover on this theme issue on the medieval child.
specific stories or events involving children such as the Massacre of the Holy Innocents. Is it because of the apparent scarcity of children in medieval art, or their ambiguous appearance, that art has been used so infrequently in studies about the concept and character of medieval childhood?

Whatever the flaws in his methodology, Philippe Ariès appeared to be following Huizinga's footsteps when he used art in his study of the history of childhood; however, his limitations in this area are quite obvious in his choice of examples which support his theories while ignoring those that did not.54 This is especially clear when he tried to further his theory that high infant and child mortality rates must have resulted in a very different attitude of parents towards their offspring:

No one thought of keeping a picture of a child if that child had either lived to grow to manhood or had died in infancy. In the first case, childhood was simply an unimportant phase of which there was no need to keep any record; in the second case, that of the dead child, it was thought that the little thing which had disappeared so soon in life was not worthy of remembrance: there were far too many children whose survival was problematical. The general feeling was, and for a long time remained, that one had several children in order to keep just a few.55

This, according to Ariès, explained the absence of medieval tomb effigies commemorating children although he was characteristically inconsistent about this supposed absence; on the one hand, he cited the Gaignières Collection to illustrate his claim that 'the child appeared only at a very late date, in the sixteenth century' whereas on the other hand, when referring to the 1378 tomb of Cardinal de la Grange at Avignon and its inclusion of the two young princes he had tutored, he softened down this claim with an added footnote that 'before this, the representation of children on tombs was rare'.56

In fact, representation of the child was not an unknown phenomenon on medieval tombs, although at first largely confined to royal and noble offspring, and a closer study of the Gaignières Collection would have provided Ariès with a fair number of examples from this period. His claim that the child's 'first appearance was not on his own tomb or that of his parents but on that of his teachers' was based on a rather one-sided look at tombs such as that of Cardinal de la Grange and those of the masters of Bologna but here already Ariès failed to notice one important distinction:57 whereas the Cardinal's pupils are individual weepers, the

54 This is one of the objections raised against Ariès' working method by Anthony Burton, 'Looking Forward from Ariès? Pictorial and Material Evidence for the History of Childhood and Family Life', *Continuity and Change* 4:2 (1989) 203-39.
56 Ariès (1986) 36 and n. 12.
57 Ariès (1986) 36.
usually nameless pupils on other teachers' tombs serve iconographically rather as attributes denoting the deceased's function in life than as personalized weepers, and this does not even take into account the pupils' ages. Characteristically, Ariès contradicted himself again when discussing 'the appearance of the portrait of the dead child in the sixteenth century', which to him 'marked a very important moment in the history of feelings':

The child was not at first portrayed alone, but on his parents' tomb. Gaignières's records show the child by his mother's side and very tiny, or else at his parents' feet.
These tombs all date back to the sixteenth century: 1503, 1530, 1560.58

This excerpt suggests a certain amount of confusion over some totally distinct aspects of tomb iconography: portrayal vs. representation and commemoration of the deceased vs. the inclusion of weepers. In medieval art at least up to the fourteenth century, the deceased was not so much individually 'portrayed' in the modern sense of the word as rather 'represented' in terms of gender and social status; the resulting idealized image rarely reflected accurately the age and physical appearance of the deceased. Furthermore, the dead child commemorated in its own right is rather different from living and/or deceased offspring featuring as weepers on the parental tomb; it has even been argued that the latter rather served the greater glory of the parents instead of the commemoration of the individual child.59 By relying too much on visual evidence, Ariès overlooked the fact that commemoration through tomb effigies is not the only proof of affection for the deceased - whether adult or child - as effigies were not only confined largely to those in the upper ranks of society but also subject to other conditions such as the availability of artists to undertake such commissions or of funds from which to pay them. Lavish funeral arrangements were not always followed by the commissioning of effigies while some preferred the institution of chantries or other types of donation to religious foundations for the benefit of the souls of the deceased; even when one disregards

58 Ariès (1986) 38; Among the 'interesting tombs' in Westminster Abbey, Ariès only noted that of the Marchioness of Winchester (d. 1586) with her husband and 'the tiny tomb of a dead child'. He obviously was not aware of any medieval child tombs at the Abbey, or the fourteenth-century effigies of Edward III's infant children, Blanche of the Tower and William of Windsor. See, for example, Joan D Tanner, 'Tombs of Royal Babies in Westminster Abbey', Journal of the British Archaeological Association 16 (1953) 25-40, and Sophie Oosterwijk, "A swithe feire graue": The Appearance of Children on Medieval Tomb Monuments, The 1997 Harlaxton Symposium Proceedings, forthcoming.
59 Paul Binski, Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation (London, 1996) 106: 'the growing trend towards promoting imagery of "issue" from a marriage also lent to children the character of a commodity; they became as manifest a sign of achievement as the bearing of arms and a loyal marriage'. More debatable is the sequel to this interpretation, also on 106: 'But though children are in a sense idolized on such memorials, their presence is still subsidiary. This was not a child-centred culture. They belong to the same realm of family attributes as pets [...]'.
such 'invisible' evidence of affection and honour, there remains the fact that a great
many medieval tomb monuments have been lost to us over time.

Ignoring these various issues, Ariès concentrated on the presumed scarcity or
absence of children on medieval tombs to support his theory that at least until the
sixteenth century children were not considered worth remembering if they died
young, simply because of the fact that medieval parents were relatively indifferent
towards their often short-lived offspring, anyway. Hence the presumed
introduction of the child on renaissance monuments for him heralded a new way of
adult thinking about children and childhood, of which the first signs were visible in
the thirteenth century when the stiffly formal and detached-looking figures of the
romanesque Virgin and Child came to make way for the affectionately maternal
gothic Virgin. It has already been noted that Ariès did not believe in a smooth and
even progression towards a supposed discovery of childhood:

Everything in fact would seem to suggest that the realistic representation of children
or the idealization of childhood, its grace and rounded charms, was confined to Greek
art. Little Eroses proliferated in the Hellenistic period, but childhood disappeared
from iconography together with the other Hellenistic themes, and Romanesque art
returned to that rejection of the special features of childhood which had already
characterized the periods of antiquity before Hellenism. This is no mere coincidence.
Our starting-point in this study is a world of pictorial representation in which
childhood is unknown.60

It was quite correctly pointed out in an article by Ilene Forsyth that the romanesque
Virgin and Child of the sedes sapientiae type should be explained not in terms of
maternal feelings but as a religious personification of Christ as the Divine Wisdom
with his mother acting as his throne.61 One might also consider the question
whether the hellenistic figure of Eros represented a true child, in the way that its
renaissance successor the winged putto was not a true child, either - something
about which Ariès was again rather ambivalent.62 Reviewing Ariès' book,
Lawrence Stone remarked on the contradiction between the decoration of Florentine
houses with putti in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and the despatch of real
babies from these same houses to wetnurses in the country, although this seeming
contradiction is not quite as straightforward as Stone believed.63 Nevertheless, for

60 Ariès (1986) 32.
61 Ilene H Forsyth, 'Children in Early Medieval Art: Ninth through Twelfth Centuries', Journal
of Psychohistory 4 (1976) 31-70; see also her earlier book The Throne of Wisdom: Wood
62 Compare Ariès (1986) 41 'Another type of child portraiture unknown to the Middle Ages is the
putto, the naked child' with his statement on p. 42: 'Like the medieval child - a holy child, or a
symbol of the soul, or an angelic being - the putto was never a real historic child in either the
fifteenth or the sixteenth century'.
63 Stone (1974) 27: 'Putti, which Ariès uses as evidence of the discovery of childhood, are
therefore really not evidence at all'. The Italian practice of sending babies away to wetnurses has
Ariès the attitude towards childhood as a distinct phase of life only began to improve in the fifteenth, or rather even the sixteenth century. Studying the seasonal activities in tapestries and books of hours led him to conclude that 'the children are still missing in the fifteenth century';\(^64\) this only changed when 'finally, as from the sixteenth century, a new character came on the scene in the calendars: the child'.\(^65\) And with this arrival on the (calendar) scene, according to Ariès, came a new concept: 'the concept of the family'.\(^66\)

Ariès argued that 'an analysis of iconography leads us to conclude that the concept of the family was unknown in the Middle Ages, that it originated in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and that it reached its full expression in the seventeenth century'.\(^67\) However, a legitimate argument against this theory is the question of whether artists were depicting a new phenomenon or whether they were becoming interested in something that had been around for much longer. One can certainly find images that depict a clear concept of the family in the fourteenth century, the emergence of offspring and siblings as weepers on tomb monuments in this period being but one example, just as one will discover children in medieval art if one is keen to find them.

There is a curious contradiction in Ariès' way of thinking; whereas he believed children in the Middle Ages to have been part of adult society he failed to find them depicted amongst adults in medieval imagery. Just as he could not discover children or the concept of the family in art before the fifteenth century, he also believed that earlier medieval artists were virtually incapable of creating interior scenes; for him interior scenes indicated privacy, and so it was only towards the Renaissance that he believed that 'private life, thrust into the background in the Middle Ages, invades iconography'.\(^68\) However, this conclusion again was based more on his own expectations than on accurate observation; for example, he claimed that it was only in this later period that 'the theme of childbirth makes its appearance, the birth of the Virgin providing the pretext'.\(^69\) However, although artists from the fifteenth century on indeed pay greater attention to the interior and individual details in the room, the \textit{theme} of childbirth had already been popular for

\(^{6a}\) long been subject to scrutiny and interpretation by historians; for a recent discussion of breastfeeding and wetnurses in medieval and renaissance Italy, see Beth Ann Williamson, \textit{The Virgin Lactans and the Madonna of Humility in Italy, Metz and Avignon in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries}, unpublished PhD thesis, University of London (1996) esp. chapter 7.

\(^{64}\) Ariès (1986) 329; he obviously meant that 'children as they should be depicted in a modern sense' are missing as he had already claimed that children do appear in earlier medieval art, albeit in a 'deformed' way.

\(^{65}\) Ariès (1986) 330.

\(^{66}\) Ariès (1986) 333.

\(^{67}\) Ariès (1986) 341.

\(^{68}\) Ariès (1986) 334.

\(^{69}\) Ariès (1986) 334.
centuries, as indicated by the eagerness with which artists from the early Middle Ages on seem to have grasped every opportunity to depict the births of both secular and biblical figures. The medieval interest in childbirth scenes is particularly conspicuous in thirteenth-century illuminated manuscripts of the *Bible moralisée* where even such obscure episodes as the birth of Tamar’s twins may be used to draw a comparison with the good and bad people emerging from the Holy Church. Admittedly, such scenes are not always gynaecologically convincing - especially the birth of twins - but realism is certainly not the issue in the *Bible moralisée* where the real purpose was a religious-didactic one.

Realism was, however, an issue for Ariès although he does not seem to have been fully aware of it; what he observed was a growing interest among late-medieval artists in depicting interior scenes more realistically, in line with the discovery of the perspective and a move towards more secular subjects. In order to support his theory on the emergence of private life and the family from the fifteenth century on, Ariès chose to disregard the existence of interior scenes in earlier medieval art:

> The profane iconography of the Middle Ages is an open air iconography. When, in the thirteenth or fourteenth century, the artists set out to illustrate particular anecdotes and incidents, they hesitate, and their naivety turns into clumsiness: they never achieve anything like the virtuosity of the anecdotal painters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Before the fifteenth century, interior scenes are therefore extremely rare.

For Ariès there was a world of difference between the gospel writer of early medieval art, ‘placed in a timeless setting’ which he refused to acknowledge as an interior even if it did feature an ornamental curtain, and the author presented in fifteenth-century miniatures in ‘a room where there are shelves lined with books’;
in other words, Ariès would only recognize an interior scene as a proper room if it met his own specific criteria. However, as one author pointed out, 'the nature of art is not an historical constant'.

The problem is the assumption by Ariès, but also by other authors, that art should always reproduce reality as we now see it, which persuaded him to draw unfavourable comparisons not only between medieval and renaissance art but ultimately also between medieval and modern childhood; whereas modern parents are usually surrounded by pictures of their children, in the Middle Ages 'no one thought of keeping a picture of a child'.

Failing to find representations of children in early medieval art that met his modern standards, just as he refused to recognize medieval interiors, he inevitably drew the conclusion that there was a change in mentality and that the concept of 'childhood' was therefore a later discovery.

Notwithstanding the clear fact that Ariès' approach to medieval art was at best naive, if not actually misguided, medieval art is still used by many historians as illustrating 'reality' and one wonders how far the general picture of medieval life is still determined by the frequently reproduced colourful illuminations from medieval manuscripts. Equally, the idea of the medieval child as a 'miniature adult' has proved surprisingly tenacious not in popular thought but even amongst researchers.

**THE CHILD AS A 'MINIATURE ADULT'?**

It was not only the visual commemoration of the dead child or the emergence of the family in art that struck Ariès as significant new developments; to him these came after a long period of artists learning to depict the child at all. Thus, he claimed that 'in the world of Romanesque formulas, right up to the end of the thirteenth century, there are no children characterized by a special expression but only men on a reduced scale'. To illustrate this he cited the example of a twelfth-century Ottonian miniature from Otto III's gospel book to illustrate 'the deformation which an artist at that time would inflict on children's bodies'. Ariès combined the 'evidence' from the larger-than-life heroes in epic literature and the 'miniature adults' in the art of the same period to claim not only that 'the men of the tenth and eleventh centuries did not dwell on the image of childhood' but, in the same breath, 'that that image had neither interest nor even reality for them'. Admittedly,
'around the thirteenth century, a few types of children are to be found which appear to be a little closer to the modern concept of childhood';\textsuperscript{80} however, it was an 'idea of childhood which only a keen observer can distinguish in the thirteenth century and which did not exist at all in the eleventh century'.\textsuperscript{81}

A relatively early critique of this aspect of Ariès' claims, albeit still fourteen years after the publication of the English translation of his book, came from Ilene Forsyth, who concentrated on art from the ninth through twelfth centuries; she set out to prove that it is possible to find children in the art of this period, thus revealing what Schultz would call a sentimentalist attitude.\textsuperscript{82} However, her range of subject matter - from Truth as an innocent child to souls depicted as children - and geographical area - from Anglo-Saxon England to Byzantium, with occasional excursions into ancient Greek and Roman art - suggests a degree of desperation that almost undermines her argument. Nevertheless, Forsyth issued a quite astute warning about the risk of misinterpreting the 'emblemmatic [sic] and instructive rather than artistic' nature of some images, like those of children in medieval treatises. Therefore, it would be wrong to draw any conclusions about a medieval lack of understanding of children from the unrealistic appearance of the many diagrams of foetus positions in the womb in medical manuscripts throughout the Middle Ages. However, the author of a comparatively recent book on medieval pregnancy and childbirth did exactly that when offering an illustration of such a medieval foetus position diagram with the comment: 'Notons la maladresse avec laquelle est représenté le foetus, plus proche d'un petit adulte que d'un bébé'.\textsuperscript{83} Of course, the foetus may look anatomically more like an adult figure moving around in an upside-down jar but it is not a matter of 'clumsiness' as such on the part of the illuminator, and thus merely an example of artistic failure; the diagram was intended to be utilitarian, and others like it were copied over and over again throughout the medieval period.\textsuperscript{84} Although they may lack anatomical realism, they were meant to show the various possible positions of the foetus in the womb with written instructions on how to handle each complication and apparently, by modern medical standards, they fulfilled that function quite well.\textsuperscript{85}

\textsuperscript{80} Ariès (1986) 32.
\textsuperscript{81} Ariès (1986) 34 - my italics.
\textsuperscript{82} Forsyth (1976); Schultz (1995) 6.
\textsuperscript{83} Sylvie Laurent, \textit{Naitre au Moyen Age: De la conception à la naissance: la grossesse et l'accouchement (XIIe-XVe siècle)} (Paris, 1989) fig. 31 from a fifteenth-century manual.
\textsuperscript{84} A list of medieval medical manuscripts containing foetus diagrams can be found in L C MacKinney, \textit{Medical Illustrations in Medieval Manuscripts} (London, 1965) Appendix.
\textsuperscript{85} See also the discussion in MacKinney (1960) esp. 231-33; according to MacKinney, 232, 'most sets of diagrams seem to have followed the general arrangement and method of portrayal shown in a famous ninth-century manuscript (Brussels, 3714)'. 
The above interpretation of medieval foetus diagrams shows that Ariès was not the only scholar guilty of studying his subject with what Wilson called a 'present-minded point of view'. 'Present-mindedness' can cloud one's judgement when confronted with such an emotive subject as childhood, and it is vital to be aware of modern stereotypes that may influence one's own point of view; parents nowadays usually wish to see their babies smile into the camera, even though such a brief moment - if successfully captured - is probably not quite as characteristic for infants as the less photogenic activities of sleeping, sucking, drooling or crying. Compared to such ideal modern images of smiling carefree babies, the medieval image of a swaddled cocoon often has quite an alienating effect although by medieval standards it would make a perfectly intelligible picture of an infant without quite those same connotations; as we shall see in chapter 3, even the most primitive image of a swaddled child would still have been recognizable, and it must have been a boon to less talented artists.

Present-mindedness also often intrudes into the subject of child costume. One of the claims made by Ariès was that once it had outgrown the swaddling stage, 'nothing in medieval dress distinguished the child from the adult'. It would seem that in this respect, again, the medieval child looked like a mere miniature adult. Ariès' first statement could be difficult to prove or disprove - after all, medieval clothes do not usually survive nor do inventories and other documents provide any conclusive evidence - but the conclusions drawn from it are another matter. Studies of medieval dress necessarily rely greatly on the depiction of costume in art but to assume that medieval artists always rendered clothes faithfully and realistically would be rather naive; as mentioned earlier, scenes that appear to depict everyday life may actually present an idealized image with ordinary people being shown in more luxuriously colourful dress than they would have worn in reality. This is why one should be wary of basing any claims about the colours or styles of medieval children's dress on the appearance of children in manuscript illuminations. The Catalan 'doctor illuminatus' Raymond Lull (Raymundus Lullus, 1232-1315/6) may have recommended in his Doctrina pueril the colours blue, green and vermillion because of their presumed beneficial effects on the spirit but one should consider in how far medieval people would have read, or followed, his advice, let alone applied it to children's clothes; except in the highest circles, 

86 Wilson (1980) 136; the term 'present-minded' was first used in 1932, as Wilson points out in his note 19. 
most children would probably have worn whatever was most practical and economic. Tomb monuments, too, often provide an idealized image, subject to artistic convention, especially in the case of child effigies where the appearance does not always match the actual age of the deceased. Consequently, writers on costume history either tend to ignore the subject of children's clothes altogether or fall back upon what evidence there is on adult clothes of the medieval period for comparison before moving on to later periods that provide more reliable evidence. Some authors, however, fell into the trap of regarding medieval art as faithfully representing reality, especially manuscript illuminations which one early author declared to be 'perhaps the most prolific source of information. [...] They exist in such profusion and the drawings, as a rule, are executed with such painstaking exactitude that we get a very complete idea of the varied silhouettes of the centuries and the proper wear for each class and section of society'. One more recent author was so keen to study children's costume that she even regarded the bronze weepers on Edward III's tomb as 'fine examples of children's wear at the time', even though the royal offspring are not represented as children at all.

Ariès may be right in his claim that medieval children's clothes were based on adult costume, but this is not in itself surprising nor does it lead inevitably to the conclusion that therefore children must have been regarded as miniature adults; after all, toddlers nowadays are often dressed in jeans and other miniature versions of adult clothes. The medieval robe or tunic certainly seems to have survived as the typical child's garment after it was discarded in favour of the short coat and tight

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not specify these colours for children but instead cites them as examples of physical sensations in comparison with spiritual virtues in his section 'De forteresce': 'Ausi com color bloie ou vert confortent et enforcent la veiie corporel, et veoir color vermeille enforcist corage d'ome, ausi remembrer et entendre et amer Dieu et son pooir et les autres virtuz qui sont convenienz a Dieu [...]' One could, therefore, question at least some of the statements made by Riché and Alexandre-Bidon (1994) 67-68: 'Les couleurs des "cottes" ou robes des enfants ne sont pas dépourvues de valeurs symboliques. L'enfant est habillé de rouge, de vert, parfois de bleu ou de brun. Il porte, rarement, des vêtements à carreaux, ou rayés de larges bandes horizontales. [...] Il existe bel et bien un "costume d'enfant". Much more relevant are Lull's recommendations on how not to dress a child too warmly in his section 'De la maniere sus laquele home doit norrir son fiuz', 206. In view of the interpretation of Lull's text by Riché and Alexandre-Bidon, it would seem a wise precaution personally to check every primary source rather than rely on their use in secondary sources, but this is unfortunately not achievable within the scope of a PhD dissertation.

89 For example, Phyllis Cunnington and Anne Buck, Children's Costume in England from the Fourteenth to the End of the Nineteenth Century (London, 1965) who admitted, 13, that 'contemporary evidence, written or pictorial, of children's clothing in this century is extremely rare and little girls appear to be almost entirely ignored'.

90 Mary G Houston, Medieval Costume in England and France: The 13th, 14th and 15th Centuries, A Technical History of Costume, vol. 3 (London, 1939) vii. Compare Alexandre-Bidon and Closson (1985) 107, who remarked that 'Hélas, les miniatures ne détaillant que rarement la couture des vêtements, il est délicat d'en juger'; however, rather debatable is their subsequent use of decimals to define their findings of costume details in manuscript illuminations, e.g., 108, in the statement 'la ceinture resserre la chemise à la taille dans 13,46% des cas'.

breeches for adults in the fourteenth century, and it remained the typical dress for little girls as well as boys until the latter were 'breeched'; although Holbein's half-length portrait of c. 1538 of the future Edward VI (born 12 October 1537) appears to show an infant in elaborate adult-like costume with Tudor bonnet, it cleverly disguises the fact that the little prince undoubtedly wore a child's skirt below his costly doublet. The robe probably owed its survival as the typical child's garment as a concession to wearability and practical use for everyday wear, especially for the very young who cannot possibly have exchanged their swaddling clothes for adult dress. By the end of the Middle Ages, children might be portrayed in ceremonial costume, especially if the portrait was intended for a particular occasion, but it is very unlikely that they would actually be wearing such clothes every day in the nursery; in comparison with Holbein's portrait of Edward, the 1494 portrait of Charles Orland by the Master of Moulins shows the twenty-six-month-old dauphin wearing a surprisingly practical and informal-looking outfit consisting of a baby's coif covered by a linen cap, and a bib over his plain white robe, which probably gives a better idea of everyday reality.

Even before the robe became the distinct child's costume, children's clothing may have differed from that of adults in the materials used, which would have been less costly and more durable. This could also be an explanation of some of the terminology found in documents for, unlike what some authors have claimed, we cannot be certain that special words for items of children's clothing are a reliable indication of a distinct type of apparel for children; some of these terms may instead indicate a child-size version of an adult garment, or possibly one made in a different material.92 Tantalising pieces of information relating to the purchase of children's clothing may be found in household accounts and other documentation such as the Paston Letters, as the following excerpt from a letter by Margaret Paston to her husband away in London shows:

I pray 3w þat 3e wyl vowche-save to don bye [...] summe frese to maken of 3wr childeris gwnys; 3e xall haue best chepe and best choyse of Hayis wyf, as it is told me. And þat 3e wyld bye a 3erd of brode clothe of blac for an hode fore me of xliijj d. or iiij s. a 3erd, for þer is n[0]there gode cloth nere gode fryse in this twn. As for þe childeris gwnys, and I haue cloth I xal do hem maken.93

92 Riché and Alexandre-Bidon (1994) 65: 'Lorsque l'on étudie les comptes princiers, on relève des mentions de pièces vestimentaires explicitement destinées aux enfants, et à eux seuls; dont les noms - "gonelles", bonnets, calottes et "collerettes en toile de Hollande" - ne se retrouvent pas dans la garde-robe de leurs parents.'
93 The town referred to is Norwich; 'fresé' is frieze, a coarse woollen stuff. See Norman Davis (ed.), Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century, part I (Oxford, 1971) letter no. 130, 226-27, from Margaret Paston to John Paston I, dated late 1448. Their eldest son, John II, was born in 1442, John III in 1444 while a third, Edmond, may have been born by the time of this letter.
In another letter dated 8 July 1444 Margaret wrote to her husband: 'As for cappys that ye sent me for the chylderyn, they be too lytyl for hem. I pray yow bey hem feynere cappys and largere than they were.' It is interesting to note that Margaret - a practical and shrewd housekeeper - specifically orders cheap, coarse woollen stuff for her sons' gowns without stipulating colour; her prime concern was obviously the best value for a garment that would be put to some hard use by a young boy. Wool may also have indicated wear for a colder season; votive offerings at the shrine of Thomas Cantilupe at Hereford recorded by papal commissioners on 29 August 1307 (midway between Cantilupe's death in 1282 and canonization in 1320) included 95 silk and linen children's shifts, although these garments may have been made specifically for votive purposes rather than for actual wear. In contrast, caps are likely to suffer less hard wear and might therefore be 'finer' than those originally bought by Margaret's husband; interestingly, children are more often depicted as bare-headed in medieval art. The omission of colour in Margaret's notes is interesting in view of the symbolic value some authors have attached to colour on the basis of Lull's recommendations. In short, although child costume in the Middle Ages may ultimately have been based on adult dress, both as regards the survival of the robe for infants and the adoption of adult fashion for older children, concessions would undoubtedly have been made to make them more practical for children to wear. The argument of dress can certainly not be used to support any claims about the medieval child being merely a 'miniature adult'.

Strangely enough, even the most typical of children's characteristics - toys and play - have been put into question in the debate about childhood. Ariès argued that many familiar children's games - largely defunct amongst today's children but still popular earlier this century - actually started out in the Middle Ages as games of skill amongst adults and jongleurs; therefore, the hoop was not uniquely a child's toy although the little figure with a hoop in the margin of a Flemish psalter of c. 1320-30 (Bodleian MS Douce 5, f. 127v) still does look quite like a young boy.

94 Davis (1971) no. 127, 220. The children referred to would have probably have been the two Johns although there may have been other children who died young.
95 Or would frieze have had its own colour, like the children's caps that would probably have been made of white linen? Certainly, colour was very important to Margaret when it concerned her own clothes, from the gown described by her future mother-in-law as 'a godely blew or ellys a brighte sangueyn', letter no. 13, to her own expressed desire for her husband's return home 'lever dan a new gounne', letter no. 126, probably dated 28 September 1443.
96 At a recount in mid November two more children's shifts were found to have been donated; see Ronald C Finucane, Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England (London, 1977) 98, based on MS Vat Lat 4015, f. 74 and 312-313. These 'shifts' were presumably the type of robe or tunic usually worn by young children.
97 See Ariès (1986) chapter 4, 'A Modest Contribution to the History of Games and Pastimes', esp. 91-92. See also Johanna W P Drost, Het Nederlandsch kinderspel vóór de zeventiende eeuw
Puppet-shows were not necessarily only children's entertainment in the Middle Ages, either, just as related forms of puppet theatre are still enjoyed by adults today in countries like Indonesia;\(^8_b, 8_c\) this again can make puppet-show scenes in medieval marginalia quite ambiguous to interpret.\(^9_9\) Toys from the medieval period are rare survivals as many were made of perishable materials as well as subject to wear and tear through intensive use, but many types of toys have come down to us not just through depictions in medieval art but also as archaeological finds. Sometimes the nature of potentially ambiguous objects can be confidently determined, as in the case of a leather mask from the fourteenth century found by archaeologists in Kampen in the Netherlands, which because of its size can only have been worn by a child.\(^10_0\) Still the interpretation of such archaeological finds may be a matter for debate. With regard to hobby-horses, windmills and dolls that Ariès observed - rather late - in art from the fifteenth century on, he remarked as follows:

> It is obvious that these dummies were reserved for little children. Yet one is entitled to wonder whether this had always been true and whether these toys had not previously belonged to the world of adult. Some toys originated in that spirit of emulation which induces children to imitate adult processes, while reducing them to their own scale. This is the case with the hobbyhorse, at a time when the horse was the principal means of transport and traction. Similarly, the little sails spinning round on the end of a stick could not be anything but the imitation by children of a technique which, unlike that of the horse, was not very old: the windmill technique introduced in the Middle Ages. The same reflex governs the children of today when they imitate a lorry or a car. But while the windmill has long ago disappeared from our countryside, the child's windmill is still on sale in toyshops and market or fairground stalls. Children form the most conservative of human societies.\(^10_1\)

The desire in children to imitate the activities of adults is a natural part of a child's learning process towards its future role in adult life and often indicative of gender role models: girls will generally play with dolls while medieval boys would probably have preferred toy horses and carts in the way that their modern counterparts collect cars. Yet the fact that many toys were actually miniature versions of adult objects does not mean that children were merely miniature adults. Ariès also wondered about the nature of dolls and miniature objects:

> Historians of the toy, and collectors of dolls and toy miniatures, have always had considerable difficulty in separating the doll, the child's toy, from all the other images and statuettes which the series of excavations yield up in wellnigh industrial quantities and which more often than not had a religious significance: objects of a

\(^{9_9}\) See Annemarieke Willemsen, Kinder delijt: Middeleeuws speelgoed in the Nederlanden, Nijmeegse Kunsthistorische Studies 6 (Nijmegen, 1998) 95-96 and figs. 60-61.

\(^{10_0}\) One of the relatively few medieval items in the exhibition catalogue Kinderen van alle tijden: Kindercultuur in de Nederlanden vanaf de middeleeuwen tot heden (Zwolle/Bois-le-Duc, 1997) cat. 199, plate 181.

\(^{10_1}\) Ariès (1986) 65-66.
household or funerary cult, relics from a pilgrimage, etc. How many times have we been shown 'toys' which were in fact miniature replicas of familiar objects placed in tombs? Indeed, some miniature objects from the past were clearly never intended as toys, like some of the grave goods in ancient Egyptian tombs; the place and context in which such objects are found should therefore always be considered carefully before one can interpret such finds as toys or miniature everyday objects intended for children, or rather as cult objects or decorative knick-knacks. Sometimes, however, the combination of art, written evidence and realia can shed more light on such a problem; for example, the splendidly illuminated miracle story of three-year-old Marote, who apparently drowned when trying to fill 'ung petit pot' with water from the river, shows that such objects really were used by children. Similarly, Hanawalt quoted another example of a little boy who drowned after he slipped into a pit while trying to retrieve the dish with which he had attempted to scoop water, although this was not necessarily a toy dish.

Of course, aristocratic children had nobler toys than mere household utensils; Edward I appears to have spent money on a toy cart, a painted crossbow, a model castle and a boat for his young son Alfonso. That some toys and games were not considered to be merely appropriate to a child's age and future position in society but sometimes even prophetic is clear from the autobiography De rebus a se gestis by Gerald of Wales (1147-1222?), who described how his father observed young Gerald building monasteries and churches in the sand while his three elder brothers built sand castles and cities; this persuaded the father to have his young son properly taught and call him his 'little bishop' although to his chagrin Gerald never progressed beyond archdeacon.

Thus, in combination with written sources and archaeological evidence, art may provide additional information about childhood and its attributes; for example, it can give us an idea about toys which have otherwise failed to survive, such as whirligigs or hobbyhorses. Medieval images should never be taken at face value, however; the little figure of *infantia* in William de Brailes' Wheel of Life does not help us understand what a childwalker of the period looked like - in fact, the artist...

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103 Late fifteenth-century manuscript of the *Vie et miracles de saint Louis* (BN, ms. fr. 2829, f. 98v), in Riché and Alexandre-Bidon (1994) 176; the long-haired figure in adult clothes representing Marote in the consecutive scenes looks much older than three.
105 Edward I's expenditure on toys is quoted by Ashdown (1979) 19.
has made it look more like a little siege engine - but it can serve as evidence that the
childwalker must have been quite a familiar object around 1240. Schultz contrasted
the sceptical approach of Ariès with that of Ignaz Zingerle, who in his 1868 book
on medieval toys simply assumed that the rattle must always have been used as a
child's toy notwithstanding a lack of evidence for its existence in the Middle Ages,
and claimed that 'while Ariès looks at the past and finds nothing familiar, Zingerle
looks at the past and finds familiar things that aren't even there'.107 In fact, had
Zingerle (and Schultz) but known it, a great number of clay rattles dating back to
the eleventh to fourteenth centuries survived to be discovered by archeologists in
the Netherlands and Belgium;108 the Old-English word *punung* also attests to its
long history.109 Even so, Ariès was quite right in pointing out the danger of
unquestioningly interpreting any figure at play as a representation of a child.

Willemsen's conclusion was that play was believed to be a necessary phase
for the medieval child until it was old enough to start the next phase of its life. That
next phase started soon enough as the Venetian envoy's report has made clear,
although for many children the transition from play to work would have come more
gradually, even though early, especially among the lower classes:

> Even if children of four and older were simply sitting and observing their parents
work, they were beginning to learn some tasks such as cooking, brewing, milking,
and digging. During the years six through twelve, children began to have real chores
around the house, aiding both their parents in work and contributing to the
supplemental income of the household through fishing and gathering food.110

Younger children might also be left at home minding their smaller siblings,
sometimes with disastrous results, like the one-year-old boy who was burnt in his
cradle through the negligence of his five-year-old brother;111 a sad but not unique
case of a small child being unwisely given adult responsibility over a younger
sibling, with fatal consequences. While medieval children could be expected to
take part in adult working life from an early age, this did not automatically make
them 'miniature adults' for there was usually an awareness of their limitations in
what they were capable of; play also continued to be part of their nature and of

108 Annemarieke Willemsen, 'Kinderspeelgoed in de middeleeuwen: Het combineren van
verschillende soorten bronnen', *Ex Tempore* 14 (1995) 89-102, esp. 93-4 and fig. 2. Medieval
toys are the subject of Willemsen's doctoral thesis at the University of Nijmegen, published as
*Kinder delijt* (1998), in which the rattle is discussed in section 2.22.
110 Hanawalt (1986) 158; Hanawalt subsequently changed this to ages *eight* to twelve in a later
article (1988) 41.
111 Hanawalt (1986) 159.
their lives, as we shall see from the discussion of the Ages of Man in the next chapter.

Nonetheless, the *puer senex* or the child behaving with the maturity and wisdom of an adult was a popular theme in medieval culture and one can find such adult-like behaviour attributed even to infants. Miraculous feats and precocious wisdom may have come naturally to the Christ child in popular medieval stories about his infancy, including the biblical story of the twelve-year-old Christ teaching the doctors in the Temple, but they were not just his prerogative. Traditionally, saints and heroes were also likely to perform almost adult-like feats as infants, a prototype being the young Hercules who in his cradle strangled the two snakes sent to kill him by the jealous Juno.112 Another famous precocious infant, St Nicholas, was reportedly able to sit upright in his bath on either the very day of his birth or three days thereafter; his holy character was obvious from the start by his observation while still an infant of the religious fast for adults as described by, among others, John Mirk (or Myrc), the Augustinian prior of Lilleshall, Salop, who around 1400 composed a collection of homilies: 'Also when he was yn cradull, he fast Wennysday and Fryday; þe wheche dayes he nold sowke but ones yn þe day, and soo hold hym apayde'.113 This latter miracle was illustrated in art as early as the twelfth century on a small column statue from the Benedictine abbey of Saint-Maur-des-Fossés (Seine), dated c. 1150-60; it shows the mother offering her left breast to her sturdy child, part-swaddled from the waist down, who resolutely turns away his rather adult-like curly head.114 Other examples are a similar column statue of c. 1180 from the cloisters of Notre-Dame-en-Vaux at Châlons-sur-Marne and a miniature in the fourteenth-century Queen Mary Psalter in London (BL MS Royal 2B. VII, f. 315).115 This precocious abstinence was but one example of 'miraculous' behaviour on the part of babies and as such quite a popular topos. As an infant king, the uncanonized Henry VI of England reportedly indicated his refusal to travel on a Sunday by shrieking and crying so much that his entourage preferred to postpone the journey for the day.116 It is interesting to note

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112 A medieval illumination of this event can be found in a fifteenth-century manuscript of Plautus' *Amphytrion* (Paris, BN Ms fr. 252); see the cover illustration of Alexandre-Bidon and Closson (1985).


114 Now in the Musée de la Société Archéologique, this column figure has been published by Willibald Sauerländer in *Gotische Skulptur in Frankreich 1140-1270* (1970), translated as *Gothic Sculpture in France 1140-1270* (New York, 1972) pl. 51; 3 ft. high, it was apparently not part of a portal.

that these particular examples of 'saintly' behaviour - sitting upright in a bath, refusing to drink, and upsetting adults' plans through a crying fit - are not so much miraculous as almost natural, albeit unusual or even somewhat worrying by modern standards; they illustrate the phenomenon of adult projection, i.e. adults interpreting child behaviour as indicative of adult wishes or intentions.\textsuperscript{117}

A more extreme example of the \textit{puer senex} is St Rumwald, also known as Rumbold or Rumbald (feastday 31 October), who upon his birth to the royal house of Northumbria in the seventh century cried out for baptism and subsequently preached a sermon on the Trinity before dying at three days old. Although the story would seem to test anyone's credulity, the precocious St Rumwald was actually revered in various English counties during the medieval period and there was a statue of him as a naked boy at Bonnington in Kent (where he was patron saint), which scandalized Nicholas Harpsfield, Archdeacon of Canterbury (d. 1575) during his visitation of Kent in August-September 1557.\textsuperscript{118} The phenomenon of speaking infants can also be found in numerous stories of saints unjustly accused until their innocence is miraculously proved by infants testifying to the truth of the saints' protestations, one example being St Athanasius who is said to have been declared blameless by the newborn infant he was accused of having fathered.\textsuperscript{119} Clearly, the evidence of infants able to testify like adults was considered irrefutable as well as miraculous.

Whereas the precocious behaviour of St Nicholas was still a relatively natural phenomenon, the idea of speaking babies goes completely against the medieval notions about the nature of infants. However, this very fact does not indicate a medieval lack of understanding of infants; instead, the very miracle of speaking babies confirms the natural behaviour of infants who can neither walk nor talk - a fact of life of which medieval people were only too aware. Reality and nature are thus turned upside down in order for the sake of a religious miracle, and the \textit{puer senex} - far from being a condition expected from medieval children in everyday life - proves by this very contradiction that ordinary children fell well short of this ideal. Of course, whether such unnaturally precocious behaviour in infants was really a wished-for ideal is another matter but we may recall Godfrey's words quoted earlier about our forefathers being not content to prolong the days of

\textsuperscript{116} Wolffe (1981) 34; this event took place on 14 November 1423 when Henry was not yet two years old.
\textsuperscript{117} See for this phenomenon Lloyd deMause (1980) 8ff.
\textsuperscript{119} P C Tubach, \textit{Index Exemplorum: A Handbook of Medieval Religious Tales}, \textit{FF Communications} 86, no. 204 (Helsinki, 1969) no. 408.
dandling the baby but instead keen to see them grow up into healthy adults - an aim in which only too many children failed.

ARTISTIC CONVENTION AND FUNCTIONALITY

Functionality is an important factor to consider when one looks at medieval images of children; what may seem a 'miniature adult' or an otherwise unsympathetic representation by current standards may have been perfectly recognizable as a child to a medieval viewer. As we have seen, modern value judgements about the physical appearance of children in medieval art are unlikely to result in a reliable picture of medieval childhood; it is essential to judge the image material by its own standards, if possible. This requires an understanding of the use by medieval artists of representational conventions as well as deviations from tradition. For example, the marginal image in the thirteenth-century Tenison Psalter (BL MS Add. 24686, f. 13) of a mermaid suckling her small offspring who even at this stage already has her own pendulous breasts, is not another example of a 'miniature adult' among mermaids but rather illustrates the intrinsically sexual nature of the species.120 Ariès and many other historians did not always recognize the conventions that determined the appearance of the child in medieval art and so, failing to find representations that resembled their own concept of the child, they came to believe in the medieval 'miniature adult'.

The foetus diagrams discussed earlier are already an indication that, in medical treatises, anatomical proportions were not always a prime concern for medieval artists. With child dress often resembling that of adults, one may be forced to use size as the determining factor in recognizing representations of children in medieval art but even that is not always a reliable guideline. Of course, there may be additional attributes that make identification quite obvious, such as swaddling clothes for infants. The curious thing about many medieval depictions of these swaddled 'cocoons' is their size; they are often out of all proportion to the adults around them, and this phenomenon can be found throughout the Middle Ages and beyond, from depictions of an over-large swaddled infant Christ in his crib to the hugely elongated infant being exposed in the fourteenth-century manuscript of Omne bonum (British Library, MS Royal 6E VII, f. 104) through to the large swaddled infant on a late-medieval brass at Teynham, Kent, who is just as tall as the older sister alongside.121 Obviously, if the infant is swaddled it needs

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120 See Randall (1966) 498. The Tenison Psalter was begun for Edward I's son Alfonso (1273-84).
121 For the Omne bonum manuscript, see Lucy Freeman Sandler, Omne Bonum: A Fourteenth-Century Encyclopedia of Universal Knowledge (London, 1996) 2 vols. The brass shown in Page-Phillips (1970) fig. 30, actually commemorates Robert Heyward (d. 1509); his children are
no further special distinction through size although even here appearances may be deceptive: a romanesque capital of c. 1140 in the narthex of the church of Ste Madeleine at Vézelay shows a miracle by St Benedict who brings to life a farmer's dead son, but is the huge swaddled bundle with its characteristic criss-cross bands really an infant or merely the shrouded corpse of a potentially older child with his face covered? In the art of this period, the same criss-cross bands that are such a typical feature of infants' swaddling bands in later medieval art may also occur as part of the funeral shroud on adults, as can be observed in the illuminations of the raising of Lazarus and the awakening of the dead in the Winchester Psalter of c. 1150-60 (BL MS Cotton Nero C IV, f. 19 and 31). In fact, if one turns to the actual text of Gregory the Great's Dialogues from which this miracle story was taken, one finds that it is rather ambiguous: it describes the corpse of the farmer's son both as 'corpusculum infantis' and 'corpusculum pueri' and after the child's resuscitation the saint is described as taking him by the hand to give him back to his father - something that would be extremely hard to do with a swaddled infant but also with a shrouded and bound body. Medieval terminology can be quite confusing as both infans and puer can be used in a narrow as well as much wider sense, and vernacular terms are generally even more indeterminate. Although the large shrouded bundle in the Vézelay capital by itself may be hard to interpret with any certainty, its late eleventh-century counterpart in the choir of the church of Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire clearly shows the naked corpse of a boy, without either shroud or swaddling clothes. Nevertheless, there appears to have been room for (mis)interpretation even by medieval standards; the illuminator of the Ramsey Psalter of c. 1300-10 (Pierpont Morgan, MS M. 302, f. 5) had no hesitation in depicting the child as a much smaller swaddled infant held aloft in his father's arms.
Christ was often depicted as a swaddled infant in his crib but medieval artists were far from consistent in showing him with all the usual trappings of early infancy. A range of representational varieties is found within a single illuminated page on f. 124 of the De Lisle Psalter (BL MS Arundel 83, pt II), which shows six scenes from the childhood of Christ painted by the 'Madonna Master' around 1310. Here we see the Christ child as a disproportionately large swathed infant lying in his crib in the Nativity scene; as a precociously articulate, fully robed child standing upright in his mother's lap in the Adoration scene; and as a diminutive (semi-)naked infant of miniature-adult proportions in his mother's arms in the three scenes showing the Circumcision, the Presentation in the Temple and the Flight into Egypt. Viewed separately, all these depictions are determined by the artistic conventions for these scenes, rather like the stiff 'miniature adult' in the *sedes sapientiae* type of romanesque Virgin and Child. In each of these successive scenes, the Christ child is immediately recognizable as such but it is interesting to compare the representational differences within a single page, e.g. the over-large head of the Nativity Christ with the tiny heads in the three latter scenes or the fact that the Christ child is here shown majestically robed and standing to receive the Magi.

Children might be recognizable by being smaller than the adults depicted around them but if the aim was to illustrate a story there could be quite sound reasons for making a child look larger than realistic portrayal would have allowed; for example, a miniature illumination in a Parisian manuscript of c. 1330 of the *Histoire de la vie & des miracles du Roy St Louis* shows another little Marote, daughter of 'Symon flandrin bourgeois de saint denis en france', who drowned in a mill pond in 1281 but was subsequently restored to life thanks to St Louis' miraculous powers. The text underneath the image tells us Marote was only a three-year-old toddler yet the body recovered from the water looks like that of a much older child. In fact, it would have been technically problematical to highlight an accurately sized three-year-old in such a small and crowded scene, and the artist was clearly more interested in depicting the action than in an accurate portrayal of the victim whose details were clearly stated in the text anyway. Crowd scenes were a problem for medieval artists without as yet a real grasp of perspective, and to include small children in such scenes they usually had to resort to technical solutions like showing them being carried on the shoulders or backs of adults or placing them in front of the adult crowd, as in a window in the north choir.

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129 BN ms. fr. 5716, p. 288, miracle 1; see also Riché and Alexandre-Bidon (1994) 171.
aisle of Canterbury Cathedral depicting the Exodus of the Israelites or in a very similar crowd scene in the much later Egerton Genesis of c. 1350-75. Still, size alone without the correct proportions, attributes or explanatory text could lead to difficulties in interpretation not just for modern researchers but also medieval viewers. It has been suggested, for example, that the well-known miracle of St Nicholas restoring to life three butchered school-children pickled in a tub by a dishonest innkeeper may have been based on a misinterpretation of an earlier legend in which the saint saved three innocent soldiers from execution; a medieval stained glass showing the diminutive figures of the three soldiers in a prison tower with the saint - greatly enlarged as befitted his saintly status and in line with medieval iconographic practice - looming over them could easily have inspired their mistaken identification as small children, resulting in a new miracle story about three children in a tub. On the other hand, size, proportions and attributes could also be manipulated by artists to convey a particular message; thus, a woodcut in the Schedelsche Weltchronik or Nuremberg Chronicle, first published in 1493, depicts the naked 'Symon das selig kindlein zu Trient' - one of the many medieval child saints supposedly martyred by Jews - admittedly with some attention to his childish proportions yet almost the same size as the 'wicked' Jews around him, like a giant chubby infant. Not only did the artist deliberately use the characteristics of the traditional naked infant to offset his innocence against his Jewish persecutors but he has also greatly enlarged the figure of the victim to make his martyrdom as clear as possible; in contrast, while the German text has the diminutive word 'kindlein' the Latin version uses 'puerulus' to describe Simon as but a small child, yet older than the mere *infans* whose traditional characteristics he seems to share.

Medieval artistic conventions have at times been misunderstood by researchers so keen on illustrating a particular idea that they failed to interpret their chosen image properly. Lawrence Stone claimed that physical punishment was such a characteristic feature in medieval schools that the whip rather than the book was the symbolic attribute of a schoolmaster and to illustrate his point he quoted the example of Grammar at Chartres Cathedral as a 'master threatening two children

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130 Madeline Harrison Caviness, The Early Stained Glass of Canterbury Cathedral, ca. 1175-1220 (Princeton, 1977) 92 and colour pl. VII. These three token children were not included in the Peterborough Psalter, f. 11, which Caviness, 92, suggested might be due to the technical reason of lack of space. The scene in the Egerton Genesis, depicting Lot, Abraham and Sarah and their families, can be found in BL MS Egerton 1894, f. 8; see Sandler (1986) cat. 129, pl. 341.

131 At least, this is the explanation proposed by Hall (1995) 223. However, Hall gave no sources for this idea and there is no mention of it in LCI, vol. 8, 45ff.

132 An easily available facsimile edition is that of the German version: Hartmann Schedel, Die Schedelsche Weltchronik (Dortmund, 1978) f. 254v.
with a scourge';\textsuperscript{133} in fact, Grammar - like the six other Liberal Arts - was personified by a woman and the whip as her attribute dates from the fifth century.\textsuperscript{134} And for all their claims that 'un observateur plus attentif des images médiévales' may discover much useful information, Riché and Alexandre-Bidon made some serious errors of interpretation, as when they failed to understand the typical habit of medieval artists to depict successive events of a story within one scene or to read the accompanying text which would have explained the illumination. The story tells us how little Jehannot, son of 'marie dite la bourgoingne' and stepson of 'robert le macon' at Paris, was born 'droit et entier de tous les membres' and for three and a half months continued to develop normally until the day after Easter when his mother removed his swaddling clothes and found his right arm paralysed; of course, St Louis eventually managed to cure the child. The illumination above the text shows (from left to right) Marie taking the swaddled infant out of his cradle, Marie sitting with her now much older son on her lap whose right arm does look rather lifeless, Marie taking Jehannot to the shrine of St Louis, and finally mother and son giving thanks to the saint for the boy's recovery; the caption in \textit{L'enfance au Moyen Age} instead describes it as 'quatre mères ont emmené leurs enfants de tous âges au tombeau du saint; ils souffrent de paralysie'.\textsuperscript{135}

However, interpretation of medieval tomb iconography can be really hazardous. Admittedly, Ariès was wrong not only in claiming that children did not really appear on tomb monuments until after the medieval period, but also in some of the conclusions he drew from this inaccurate observation; however, the study of children commemorated on medieval tombs is fraught with interpretative dangers. Ideally medieval tomb monuments should offer an interesting opportunity to compare the portrayal of a deceased child with the actual age at the time of death; unfortunately, it is not always possible to discover the age of children, not even amongst royalty, as documentation regarding their date of birth - or even their very existence - is not infrequently lacking. An interesting case is the charming marble effigy of a little boy, which could only be identified as that of Jean de Bourgogne, son of Mahaut d'Artois, because of a surviving record of payment in July 1315 to the artist Jean Pépin de Huy, who was also responsible for the tomb of Jean's...

\textsuperscript{133} Stone (1984) 116. It is similarly doubtful whether John Boswell, \textit{The Kindness of Strangers: The Abandonment of Children in Western Europe from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance} (New York, 1988) realized that Grammar is a female personification when he described the same figure in plate 10 as a 'teacher holding a switch over oblate schoolchildren'.

\textsuperscript{134} The grammarian Martianus Capella formulated the visual aspect of the Arts in his treatise \textit{The Marriage of Philology and Mercury}; see Hall (1995) 278.

\textsuperscript{135} BN ms. fr. 5716, p. 573, miracle 48 for October 1282; Riché and Alexandre-Bidon (1994) 179. This miniature and another from the same manuscript were also illustrated in Alexandre-Bidon and Closson (1985) but printed in reverse, which makes the scenes even less intelligible.
father Othon IV (d. 1303); no other evidence remains of the probably brief existence of this 'Jehan jadis fils madame'. Jean's elegant effigy shows him as a splendidly dressed little boy but his age is difficult to gauge. Where the age of the child is well documented, however, one often finds strange discrepancies. For example, some effigies for children known to have been infants or toddlers when they died, instead portray much older children, e.g. the two tombs with Limoges effigies for two of the children the French king Louis IX (St Louis), originally situated at Royaumont; the tombs in their painted niches have been destroyed but the Limoges effigies can now be found at Saint-Denis. Blanche (born 12 July 1240) was the eldest, and long awaited, child of Louis IX and his wife Marguerite de Provence but died on 29 April 1243; Jean was the couple's fifth child but died on 10 March 1248, probably within a few months of his birth. Their Limoges effigies present them as rather ageless figures in conventional poses; drawings in the Gaignières Collection show the lost niches at Royaumont to have been originally decorated with wall-paintings of the dead children as a youth holding a falcon or hawk and a nubile young girl, respectively. Something very similar is found in England where three children of Edward III are commemorated by effigies showing them as teenagers even though they did not survive infancy: William of Hatfield was born in Yorkshire around Christmas 1336 but died only a few weeks later while his siblings Blanche of the Tower and William of Windsor also died quite young in 1342 and 1348, respectively. Nevertheless, their effigies at York Minster and Westminster Abbey show them fully dressed and looking more like adolescents; both brothers are shown wearing fashionable cloaks and belts and Blanche has her hair tied up in the latest adult fashion. No wonder, then, that William of Hatfield has often been mistakenly described as having died much older.

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136 See the exhibition catalogue L'Art au temps des rois maudits: Philippe le Bel et ses fils 1285-1328 (Paris, 1998) cat. 47, which describes the child as 'un enfant ignoré des historiens ou généalogistes et connu par la seule mention de son tombeau'. It is not known when Jean was born but he probably died before his mother's accession to the county of Artois in 1302; this would mean his effigy was not commissioned until more than a decade after his death, and only after the tomb for his father had been completed. The fact that the little effigy was subsequently transformed into a statue of St Philibert did not facilitate its eventual identification. Now in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Besançon, the effigy was originally placed at the Jacobin convent at Poligny (Jura). Compare also Alain Erlande-Brandenburg, Le roi est mort: Etude sur les funérailles, les sépultures et les tombeaux des rois de France jusqu'à la fin du XIIIe siècle, Bibliothèque de la Société Française d'Archéologie 7 (Geneva, 1975) 25: 'Souvent même nous ne connaissons l'existence des enfants de rois que par leurs tombeaux'.

137 Louis IX and his wife were married on 27 May 1234; a list of their children can be found in Jean Richard, Saint Louis: Roi d'une France féodale, soutien de la Terre Sainte (Fayard, 1983). The dates of the children's deaths are given in epitaphs on their Limoges slabs; see Erlande-Brandenburg (1975) 93 and pls XXVIII-XXIX.

1. INTRODUCTION

as befits the appearance of his effigy. The implications of presenting deceased infants as near-adults on tomb monuments will be discussed later.

Another discrepancy between real and portrayed age can be observed in the effigy of the French king Jean I, usually known as Jean le Posthume because he was born on 15 November 1316 after the death of his father Louis X (le Hutin) earlier that year. Jean only lived for five days but his effigy shows him as a small child, looking more like four or five years old; whereas the child Jean would only have been a swaddled infant, his little effigy presents him lying in state in the conventional attitude of prayer, fully robed and wearing a circlet. At least Jean is commemorated as a child, the appearance of his effigy matching the medieval concept of infantia or early childhood under the age of seven; the image of a swaddled infant may have been considered improper for a royal monument in this period. As a king in his own right, Jean was buried at Saint-Denis, the place originally designated by his great-great-grandfather St Louis as the burial place for kings, in contrast to Royaumont where royal offspring were to be buried; here his little effigy came to lie alongside that of his father Louis X, as shown in a Gaignières drawing in the Bodleian Library at Oxford.

The reason for these discrepancies again lies in the function of tomb monuments. Although intended to commemorate the dead, they also served to impress the viewer. Dynastic motivation was certainly an important factor in St Louis's decision to have his ancestors as well as his young brother and infant children commemorated through impressive tomb effigies. One explanation that is sometimes given is that the images were meant to represent the children not at their age of death but as they might have looked had they but lived to reach a riper age, and there is also the theological argument that all souls will assume the same

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139 French (1991) 45. One of those who mistook the real age of William of Hatfield was Margaret Scott, A Visual History of Costume: The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries (London, 1986) 33, where William is described as having 'died in 1344 at the age of eight' and the costume of his effigy at York is incorrectly discussed in terms of the fashion of the 1340s. The same mistake was made earlier by Phillis Cunnington and Anne Buck, Children's Costume in England from the Fourteenth to the End of the Nineteenth Century (London, 1965) 16. In fact, as French (1991) has shown, the effigy was probably not commissioned until 1377.

140 See L'Art au temps des rois maudits, cat. 75. Although it was previously thought that Jean's effigy was part of the series of effigies of his predecessors commissioned by the last Capetian king Charles ('le Bel') IV, it has most recently been suggested that Jean's effigy may have been ordered prior to 1328 by his mother, Clémence of Hungary.

141 Erlande-Brandenburg (1975) 78.


perfect age at the resurrection of the dead, as the dreamer discovers when he finds himself reunited with his deceased little daughter in the fourteenth-century poem *Pearl*. However, one must not overlook the simple reason that small swaddled infants were hardly considered to make impressive tomb effigies. This does not necessarily mean that their childhood itself was denied but for a royal monument the image of a tiny infant may have been thought less suitable in this period when portraiture in tomb effigies was probably greatly influenced by conventions of status and prestige.

The problem facing researchers is the uncertainty of whether the apparent tomb of an anonymous youth or adult may not be that of a child, after all - a problem exacerbated by the fact that effigies commemorating heart and entrail burials often depict the deceased on a much smaller scale, like 'miniature adults', which has led to mistaken identifications of supposed child tombs. Without documentary evidence, monuments such as those of Jean and Blanche de France or of Edward III's three infant children could easily be mistaken for those of adolescents. The iconography of medieval tomb effigies, especially for children, should really be compared to the theme of the Ages of Man and theological ideas about the ideal age that all people would assume at the Resurrection, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

CONCLUSION

Although this dissertation is primarily about medieval infants and infancy, it is impossible not to look at this subject within the context of childhood and its historiography. As we have seen, the depiction of infants and children in medieval art can be ambiguous and hard to interpret without a proper understanding of medieval iconographic and artistic conventions. The medieval child was not simply the 'miniature adult' that some historians have believed it to be, yet neither was it necessarily the cherished object of adult adoration in the sentimentalist tradition that is one legacy from the Victorian era.

144 See Wright (1974) 225 for the first explanation. For the second argument, see J A Burrow, *The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought* (Oxford, 1988) 104, and below; the perfect age was considered to be that which Christ was said to have attained on earth, *viz.* around thirty, as will be discussed further in chapter 2.

145 As, for example, in the case of a small early fourteenth-century effigy for a female member of the Berkeley family in Coberley, or the three diminutive figures on the window sills of the south aisle of Berkeley Church: see Ida M Roper, *The Monumental Effigies of Gloucestershire and Bristol* (Gloucester, 1931) 377-78 and 409-11. See also Charles Angell Bradford, *Heart Burial* (London, 1933) 85, n. 2. In fact, Bradford showed that heart burials were also carried out for children, as in the case of Margaret (d. March 1276) and John de Valence (d. January 1277), whose bodies were buried in Westminster Abbey but their hearts at the Black Friars' Church in London, or Edward I's son Alphonso (d. 19 August 1284 aged twelve), whose body and heart were buried in the same two churches. See also Tanner (1953) and Oosterwijk (1997 Harlaxton Symposium Proceedings, forthcoming).
Medieval infant and child mortality rates were undoubtedly high, certainly by modern western standards, and they were to remain so for many more centuries to come, although the rates were never static either during the Middle Ages or thereafter; however, in medieval culture there may have been a more urgent desire for children to grow up out of this vulnerable phase and into healthy adults. This does not necessarily imply indifference of medieval (or later) parents towards their potentially transient offspring; there are numerous records of the anguish suffered by parents when children were ill or died although there may have been a degree of resignation in the face of the all too common occurrence of child death - something that is harder to accept in modern western society where children are much fewer in number and are also naturally supposed to outlive their parents, than in many developing countries where children's survival rates are quite different.

Medieval childhood has been studied already by many authors; toys and records of children's education and/or apprenticeships have helped to provide a better understanding of the process of growing up in the Middle Ages. The medieval infant, however, is a different matter: lacking a voice of its own, it remains very much the cocoon one sees so often in art, helplessly swaddled until old enough to enjoy a more active phase of infancy, or seemingly forgotten if it failed to survive. It has been suggested for the post-medieval period that, although parents felt extreme distress at the death of a child, irrespective of its age, 'it does appear that, in every century studied, young infants were not mourned as deeply as older children. It seems as if parents grieved at the death of a baby for what that infant would have become whereas, at the death of an older child, they grieved not only for what the child would have become, but also for what the child had been.' It would be impossible to measure medieval grief but there is ample evidence of concern for the well-being and survival of children in this vulnerable phase of early infancy. Although not yet a fully developed personality, the infant was possessed of an immortal soul and as such was the subject of potentially conflicting ideas, as medieval writings show. Whether theological, physiological,

146 Medieval child death will be discussed further in chapters 4 and 5. Pollock (1993) 124-42, studied post-medieval child illness and death as recorded in diaries, letters and autobiographies from the sixteenth through to the nineteenth centuries and rejected as a myth the idea of a dramatic transformation in people's capacity for experiencing emotion although she also questioned the idea of resignation, 140: 'It is the similarity in the extent and range of parental grief which is striking, not the lack of grief in earlier parents. Most parents were acutely aware of the frequency of child death, but far from inducing a state of resignation, this only served to heighten their anxiety during any illness of their offspring, and anguish at their death.' Of course, Pollock's study was very much focussed on a select literate group of people; the illiterate poor remain virtually voiceless. Moreover, the 'objectivity' of her sources has been put into question by S Ryan Johansson, 'Centuries of Childhood/Centuries of Parenting: Philippe Ariès and the Modernization of Privileged Infancy', Journal of Family History 12 (1987) 343-65, esp. 345-48.

147 Pollock (1993) 141.
or otherwise, the nature of infancy was a matter of great interest but also for debate, as we shall see in the next chapter.
Chapter 2. THE NATURE OF INFANCY:
'Gotten in game and in great sin'

Although there is the sentimentalist view about a never-changing nature of childhood, the archetypal image of the swaddled infant seems rather difficult to reconcile with it and usually serves to confirm the popular view of the barbarity of earlier, unenlightened times, especially where child care is concerned. However, whereas the actual iconography of the *infans* will be the subject of the next chapter, here we shall be looking at the wider context. The young child could in itself symbolize virtues such as innocence, and artists were apt to use child-like features to depict the soul both at conception and at the moment of death; from Antiquity the nature of infancy and childhood had also been the subject of a wide range of studies and theories, both physiological and theological. Although it would be impossible to discuss all these theories in any detail, the aim of this chapter is to look at some of the key themes that influenced the way in which children were presented in medieval culture.

THE AGES OF MAN

The existence of a concept of childhood in the medieval period may have been questioned by some, yet observations on this stage as one of several distinct phases in human life date back to Antiquity. The theme of the Ages of Man was to become extremely popular in medieval culture and beyond; it has probably become most famous through a speech by Jacques in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, who starts off his seven Ages with 'at first the infant, / mewling and puking in the nurse's arms', followed by 'the whining school-boy with his satchel'. However, there are variations in the different schemes of the Ages and thus also in the length of time assigned to infancy and childhood. Whereas in some versions authors

1 The thirteenth-century Tuscan physician Aldobrandinus of Siena in his book *Le régime du corps*, as quoted from a manuscript version of c. 1300 (London BL MS Sloane 2435, f. 31).

2 *As You Like It*, II, vii, 143-45. Some authors on the Ages of Man actually used Shakespeare as their starting point, e.g. John Winter Jones, 'Observations on the Origin of the Division of Man's Life into Stages', *Archaeologia* 35 (1853) 167-89; R H Bowers, 'A Medieval Analogue to *As You Like It* II.vii.137-166', *Shakespeare Quarterly* 3 (1952) 109-12. Standard works on the Ages of Man are still Sears (1986) and Burrow (1988); mention should also be made here of Michael E Goodich, *From Birth to Old Age: The Human Life Cycle in Medieval Thought, 1250-1350* (Lanham/New York/London, 1989).
combined infancy and childhood with youth into a quite basic scheme of three Ages, others expanded the scheme to allow a separate space for early infancy or instead used the image of the young infant to represent the whole stage of early \textit{infantia} up to the age of seven.

The earliest known example of the Ages of Man has been ascribed to the Athenian lawgiver and poet Solon (c. 640-560 BC), who divided life into ten stages of seven years each; the first stage is that of inarticulate infancy, characterized by growth and milk-teeth, while the second stage starts with the development of proper teeth and ends at puberty.\textsuperscript{3} The theme was subsequently adopted and altered by successive authors and philosophers, including Pythagoras and Aristotle; for example, the Pythagoreans preferred a four-Age scheme of twenty years each to link each Age with a corresponding season, and in Hippocratic thought a similar scheme of four Ages was related to the theory of the four qualities, which in their turn were compared to the humours and seasons.\textsuperscript{4} The Ages of Man thus became part of wider cosmological thought and this is how the scheme in all its variations was inherited from Antiquity by the early Christians.

Of crucial importance to medieval adaptations of the Ages of Man were the works by St Augustine (354-430) and Isidore of Seville (c. 560-636). Augustine related the Ages of Man or \textit{aetates homini} to the \textit{aetates mundi} or Ages of the World and listed the former as \textit{infantia, pueritia, adolescentia, iuventus, gravitas} and \textit{senectus};\textsuperscript{5} in Augustine's scheme \textit{infantia} was compared to the period between Adam and Noah. In this scheme Noah's flood was likened to the 'oblivionis diluvio' that wipes this Age from human memory, while Augustine explained the absence of a Flood in the second Age of the World as the reason why mankind does not forget its \textit{pueritia}.\textsuperscript{6} Isidore of Seville discussed schemes of both six and seven Ages, the former corresponding to Augustine's in terminology; in his \textit{Etymologiae} he not only assigned specific lengths in years to the Ages but also tried to explain the characteristics of each through their Latin names, \textit{e.g.} by deriving \textit{puer} from \textit{puritas} and \textit{puella} from \textit{pupilla}.\textsuperscript{7} Almost around the same time, in the second half of the sixth century, the grammarian Virgil Maro of Toulouse had used

\textsuperscript{3} See Jones (1853) 168; Burrow (1988) 39 n. 91 and Appendix, 191.
\textsuperscript{4} Sears (1996) 10 and 12ff; the medical tract \textit{On the Nature of Man} ascribed to Hippocrates dates from c. 400 BC.
\textsuperscript{5} Burrow (1988) 80ff and Appendix, 199-200, which provides excerpts from Augustine's \textit{De Diversis Questionibus}.
\textsuperscript{6} Burrow (1988) 80.
2. THE NATURE OF INFANCY

the Ages of Man in his Epitomae to explain the composition of words and sentences, comparing the *infans*, *parvulus*, *puer*, *adolescens* and *iuvenis* to letters, words and phrases, also with etymological interpretations: 'Ut enim infans dicitur qui fari nescit et paruulus. cum parua gressuum molimina nititur inprimere, et puer quando pubescit [...]' \(^8\) According to Isidore, 'Prima aetas infantia est pueri nascentis ad lucem, quae porrigitur in septem annis'. \(^9\) The word *puer* in this context has the general meaning of 'child' and is not related to the succeeding specific Age of *pueritia*; in classical Latin, *puer* could refer to a slave, servant or youth in general, and medieval Latin suggests a similar range of meanings. \(^10\) Notwithstanding its relatively wide range of seven years, *infantia* for Isidore was the stage of the child's mere entry into life; his etymological interpretations of the terms *infans* and *puer* were to prove highly influential amongst medieval writers:

Infans dicitur homo primae aetatis; dictus autem infans quia adhuc fari nescit, id est loqui non potest. Nondum enim bene ordinatis dentibus minus est sermonis expressio. Puer a puritate vocatus, quia purus est, et necdum lanuginem floremque genarum habens. \(^11\)

Here Isidore sees the inability to speak or express oneself articulately as the most typical aspect of the seven-year *infantia* in his scheme, and this remained very much a traditional characterization.

Bede drew upon antique traditions to discuss in his works different schemes of three, four and six Ages; apparently, the scheme of seven Ages was not a familiar one in English culture before the Conquest. \(^12\) Discussing the six-Age scheme, Bede was responsible for changing the earlier terminology for the two last Ages into *senectus* and *aetas decrepita*, which are the terms one usually finds in

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\(^8\) D Tardi (ed.), *Les Epitomae de Virgile de Toulouse* (Paris, 1928) chapter 2 'De litera', 41. Transl.: For the infant (*infans*) is called thus because he does not know how to talk (*fari*), and small child (*paruulus*) because he strives to press upon the earth the traces of his little (*parua*) steps, and boy (*puer*) when he grows up (*pubescit*). Virgil's work was read by Bede.

\(^9\) Burrow (1988) Appendix, 200, translated as: 'The first age, infancy, belongs to the child entering life and extends for seven years'.


\(^11\) Quoted by Burrow (1988) 83, with the translation: Man in his first age is called *infans*; he is called *infans* because he does not yet know how to *fari*, that is, he cannot speak. For when the teeth are not yet well set in place, he cannot express himself properly. The *puer* is so called from purity, for he is pure and does not yet have even the first downy hairs of a beard.

\(^12\) Burrow (1988) 39.
medieval depictions of the more elaborate schemes. In his De temporum ratione of 725, Bede expounded the quadripartite version of the scheme, linking the Ages with the four humours, seasons and elements, which results in the following set of characteristics:\textsuperscript{14}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Humour</th>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Qualities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>childhood</td>
<td>blood</td>
<td>spring</td>
<td>air</td>
<td>moist and hot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>youth</td>
<td>red choler</td>
<td>summer</td>
<td>fire</td>
<td>hot and dry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>maturity</td>
<td>black choler</td>
<td>autumn</td>
<td>earth</td>
<td>dry and cold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>old age</td>
<td>phlegm</td>
<td>winter</td>
<td>water</td>
<td>cold and moist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although in this scheme, now known as the Physical and Physiological Fours, infancy is combined with childhood and adolescence into a longer span of twenty years, the specific qualities would be used by subsequent authors to explain the nature and needs of \textit{infantia}. Schemes like this show an interest in mankind as an integral part of cosmological order; Philippe de Novare in \textit{Des IV tenz d'age d'ome} of c. 1265 also expounded the four-Age scheme.\textsuperscript{15} Sometimes numerical cleverness seems to have been more important than the social or biological characteristics of the different ages, offering authors the opportunity to discuss different schemes.\textsuperscript{16} With their love of numbers and order in God's universe, medieval authors could thus draw on biological, astrological, physiological and theological comparisons between the Ages and the three Magi, the four seasons, elements and bodily humours, the six \textit{aetates} of the world, the seven planets, and so on; thus, the number of Ages could range from three to four, five, six, seven or even ten or twelve, the last allowing a comparison with the months and their labours. Similarly, variations in the number of Ages can also be found in art. One of the typological windows of the later twelfth century at Canterbury Cathedral includes six Ages of Man, headed 'sex aetates hominis', each with its own accompanying label; with the scene cramped into a half-medallion, the \textit{infans} just fits into the outer curve.\textsuperscript{17}

While there would always be a separate growing-up stage in the most basic three-Age scheme, the more elaborate schemes included separate Ages for early childhood and sometimes also for early infancy as a phase with its own unique characteristics. The famous islamic scholar Avicenna (980-1037), whose work

\textsuperscript{13} Burrow (1988) 84.
\textsuperscript{14} Based on Burrow (1988) 12, but with the Ages here placed in the first column; see also excerpts from Bede's \textit{De temporum ratione} in Burrow's Appendix, 201-2.
\textsuperscript{16} Burrow (1988) 34.
was translated in the late twelfth century, adhered to the four-Age scheme but he divided the first Age of growth up to the age of 30 (aetas adolescentiae) into five further parts: the first of these covers the period when the legs are too weak to walk, followed by a second phase of dentition when the child does not have all his teeth and the limbs are still feeble, and a third phase when the child has gained his full strength and teeth. These first two phases appear to match the Age of infantia up to the age of seven in other schemes, with clear recognition of the characteristics of early infancy; the third phase resembles pueritia. Avicenna's division had a clear impact on the German Dominican author Albertus Magnus (d. 1280); in his work De aetate, he also divided his first of four Ages, aetas puerilis, into five separate stages. Clearly, notwithstanding the adaptibility of the Four Ages to the seasons and humours, there was a feeling amongst some authors that the first Age, at least, could benefit from some further specification.

One of the most influential medieval writers on the Ages of Man was the Franciscan Bartholomaeus Anglicus; in his encyclopaedic work De proprietatibus rerum of c. 1230, translated into English by John Trevisa, he devoted his sixth book 'De etate hominis in generali et speciali' to the subject of the Ages, their physiological characteristics and needs. However, Bartholomaeus collected so many different views on the subject of the Ages as to be ultimately indecisive about their total number, his seven-Age scheme being basically an extension of the six-Age version; he thus left it to artists to decide on how many Ages to include in their illuminations of his work, as shown in a single illuminated leaf from the mid fourteenth century, now in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich (clm. 19414, f. 180). Whereas Bartholomaeus may not have clearly distinguished the last two Ages of Man, he was equally ambiguous about infantia, treating it both as the period up to the age of seven and as the earliest phase of infancy proper:

Isidir seij, and Constantyn also, ṭat ḫere ben mony diuers ages. The firste hatte infancia 'pe firste childehode', wiþouten teẹ and neuliche ige and bore, and dureŋ seuen monthis, and is ȝit ful tendre and neische, quabby and gleymy. Perfore iŋ ṭat age a child nedẹ alwey tendre and softe kepinge, fedinge, and norischinge. And childehood ṭat brediŋ teẹ strecciŋ and durith seuen Ȝere.

19 Sears (1986) 100-1; Burrow (1988) 24-25.
21 Sears (1986) 127-30; although the Munich leaf does not illustrate Bartholomaeus' De proprietatibus rerum as such, the definitions of the five Ages are clearly based on this work.
22 This was Constantinus Africanus (d. 1087), who proposed a scheme of the four Ages pueritia, iuventus, senectus and senium; see Sears (1986) 29, 128, and Burrow (1988) 22.
2. THE NATURE OF INFANCY

The work of Bartholomaeus served in its turn as the basis for other works on the Ages of Man. The age of seven was usually regarded by authors as a vital transitional stage, as it was in real life; at around seven, children left the nursery and women's care to go to school or into service. Many authors have noticed the significance of Chaucer specifically mentioning the age of the 'litel clergeoun' in the Prioress's Tale as seven, i.e. on the threshold between innocence and boyhood;\textsuperscript{24} in fact, some child martyrs, such as St Kenelm, also died at the age of seven, allowing medieval authors to stress their purity and innocence.\textsuperscript{25} As in the scheme of the Ages of Men, the transition from the nursery into adult life did not make the child into an aspirant-adult; texts still describe children in the seven-to-fourteen age band as playful, and images of the Ages often show representations of *pueritia* with a whipping-top, a ball or other toys, an early example being the late twelfth-century window at Canterbury Cathedral.

Notwithstanding the popularity of the seven-Age scheme, one may find other authors still ambivalent about the actual number of Ages. Bartholomaeus' younger contemporary, the Flemish Dominican Thomas of Cantimpré, mentioned both six and seven Ages in his *Liber de natura rerum*; his first Age of *infantia* lasted until the child could speak and *pueritia* until the age of fourteen.\textsuperscript{26} However, medieval authors also continued to compare the Ages of Man with the humours and the seasons. The thirteenth-century Tuscan physician Aldobrandinus of Siena, who died at Troyes around 1287, explained in a manuscript copy of c. 1300 of his work *Le régime du corps* (BL MS Sloane 2435, f. 31):

\begin{quote}
Premierement deues sauoir que coumunaument li fisitien dient que les eages sunt quatre. si com adolescencia iuventus. senectus. senium.
De le premiere dient quel est caude et moiste. et en cest eage croist li cors. et dure iusques a xxv. ans. v.xxx. Li secunde est caude et sece et demore li cors en se force et en se vigor et dure iusque a .xl. ans v .xlv. li terce si est froide et sece que li cors commence a descoistre et a afoiblir et dure iusques a lx. ans v .lxv. Li quarte si est froide et moiste por abondances des froides humors. qu abondent par le deffaute de la calour naturel, et dure iusques a la mort. Et en cest eage ua tos iors li cors a neant.
\end{quote}

It will be obvious from this excerpt that the theme had much wider implications, from observing and explaining mental and physiological characteristics of the different Ages to potential applications in medicine. As Burrow explained, 'the Physical and Physiological Fours thus furnished medieval scholars both with a

\textsuperscript{24} For example, Burrow (1988) 123.
\textsuperscript{26} Sears (1986) 125-26.
satisfying explanation for the *cursus aetatis* and also, through the theory of the qualities, with an account of how the order observable in the human microcosm was related to a larger macrocosmic order.  

Illustrations of Aldobrandinus' four-Age scheme tend to show the first Age - *adolescentia* rather than *infantia* - as a beardless youth instead of a child; sometimes with a flowering branch as his attribute, the *adolescens* represents the Man in his first Age up to twenty, and the emphasis is clearly on his young bloom rather than on his initial development as a child. However, if *adolescentia* relates to spring, it is the second Age of *iuventus* that compares with summer and the idea of physical perfection. A clear link between the seasons and the Ages can be seen again in other representations of *iuventus*, which is sometimes depicted as a falconer on horseback as in the Wheel of Life in the De Lisle Psalter; this has a close parallel in the image of the month May in the Fécamp Psalter from c. 1180, May being traditionally the perfect month of the year. This Age of physical perfection will be important with regard to the age that mankind will assume at the Resurrection, as will be discussed below.

Although the division into four Ages allowed very neat comparisons with the seasons, humours and elements, Aldobrandinus also chose to include the expanded version of seven Ages:

> Ce sunt quatre eage. mais le nous volons parler vn po plus sutilment. si poons dire quil en ia .vij. si con le premiere quant li enfes est nes et dure iusque a tant que li dent li comencent a venir. et cest infantia. Lautre dentium platzatua et cest quant li dent sunt venu et dure iusques a .vij. ans. La tierce pueritia, et dure iusques a .xiiij. ans. et saichies que ces trois se contienent lor le premiere ke dit vous avons. de sus ki a anon adolescentia et de ces .vij. eages vos avont dit les .ij. si condifantiai et dentium et plantatiua.

Here we return to the idea of a first stage from birth to the time when the child's teeth start to appear; Aldobrandinus seems to call this particular initial stage *infantia*. However, he then discusses the term of seven years of traditional *infantia* when the child has grown all his milk teeth, before embarking on *pueritia* as a third Age up to fourteen; no specific name is given for this second, 'teething' Age and his seven-Age scheme is not illustrated in MS Sloane 2435, unlike the four Ages in the initial E on f. 31. The illuminator responsible for the illumination on fol. 126v of the fourteenth-century De Lisle Psalter also combined seven Ages within his

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28 For the image of May, see Walter Cahn, *Romanesque Manuscripts: The Twelfth Century* (London, 1996) vol. 1, pl. 332, cat. 134: manuscript KB 76 F13, f. 5v. See also Sears (1986) pl. 68 for another example of *iuventus* on horseback, although in another manuscript (Sears, pl. 70) a similar figure represents *adolescentia*.
29 BL MS Sloane 2435, f. 31.
Wheel of Life with representations of the alternative four Ages in the corners.\textsuperscript{30} In the four-Age scheme here, \textit{infantia} in the bottom left-hand corner appears more like Aldobrandinus' \textit{adolescens} whereas \textit{infantia} in the seven-Age wheel is represented by a tiny infant held in a woman's arms in front of a fire. The woman must be the child's nurse or mother, cooking food in a pan; the text framing this roundel refers very much to the young infant, reading 'Mitis sum et humilis, lacte vivo puro'.\textsuperscript{31}

Although in the more elaborate schemes \textit{infantia} lasted seven years, artists often deployed the figure of the baby to typify this Age, just as authors devoted special attention to the characteristics of the young infant. As we saw earlier, Bartholomaeus Anglicus may have adhered to the traditional seven years of \textit{infantia} yet he also quoted a distinct stage of seven months for early infancy and devoted a long separate section 'De infantulo' to the care, needs and characteristics of the infant proper, \textit{i.e.} the period from birth to the child's first attempts to walk.\textsuperscript{32}

Around 1270 the prolific author Jacob van Maerlant produced a Middle-Dutch version of Thomas of Cantimpré's \textit{Liber de natura rerum}, called \textit{Der naturen bloeme}, in which he described seven Ages of Man.\textsuperscript{33} Here the first 'etaet vanden kinde' adheres to the traditional characterization of the child who cannot yet speak; thus, on f. 1v of the illuminated fourteenth-century copy of Maerlant's text in BL MS Add. 11390, the first Age is accompanied by a scene of a woman nursing a swaddled infant and is labelled 'kint geboren', while the second figure with a whipping-top represents the Age of \textit{pueritia}, here labelled with the Dutch diminutive 'kintscheit'.\textsuperscript{34} Maerlant agreed with Thomas of Cantimpré that the human child is weaker at birth than all other animals, being unable to crawl or walk; he quoted the authority of Aristotle for his observation that children only start to grow teeth in their seventh month.\textsuperscript{35} Yet, in addition to this feebleness, the \textit{infans} enjoys a state of innocence: 'Dat kint ne doet noch ne weet / Altoes ne gheerehande quaet, / Onthier et spreksens bestaet'.\textsuperscript{36} For Maerlant, 'Dander etaet die gaet in,'
Als kinder doen sprekens begin; it is left unclear whether Maerlant sees this juncture at age seven, when children are fully articulate, or whether he recognizes early infancy as a separate state within *infantia*. A rather longer period is designated for early infancy in the Early Scottish poem *Ratis Raving*. Here the author places the transition from early childhood into a third Age at the usual age of seven but he begins his seven-Age scheme with a separate first phase of three years:

The formost of thire eildis sere
I Set within the fyrst thre 3ere.
Than buskis child to spek ore ga
and to wyt quhat is na & 3a.
Sa lang can nocht ellis cheld think
bot one the met and one the drink,
On noryss and one slep, thai thre;
Syk is the formost proprytee.
Rycht as a best, child can no mare
bot lauch ore gret for Joy & care.
Na best has thai twa proprieties
bot seid of mankind, as jow seis.
This eild has kind of growin thing,
and as best it havis feilinge.

The age of three seems rather late but the Scottish author clearly describes to the young infant who is only interested in food and sleep, and is unable to walk or talk; at this stage, the child is still such an under-developed human being that the author feels no qualms in comparing it to an animal.

Clearly, medieval authors and artists also often treated the baby separately; thus, one may find the swaddled infant for a separate early stage, and sometimes a toddler in a baby-walker symbolising the subsequent stage of *infantia*. Attributes are often crucial for distinguishing a particular Age; for *infantia* these are frequently attributes particularly associated with babies or young toddlers. In the mid thirteenth century, William de Brailes depicted an elaborate Wheel of Fortune, into which he incorporated twelve Ages of Man; here we find one half-medallion containing a swaddled infant held between two women, perhaps the mother with Fortuna herself in view of the accompanying text scroll 'Incipit rota fortune'.

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38 R Girvan (ed.), *Ratis Raving and Other Early Scots Poems on Morals*, STS 3rd ser. 9 (Edinburgh/London, 1939), based on Cambridge University Library MS Kk. I. 5, no. 6; the manuscript dates from the later fifteenth century although the poem itself was probably composed in the opening decades of the century.
39 *Ratis Raving*, ll. 1112-25.
41 This identification of the two women was made by Sears (1986) 145-46; alternatively, it might be a childbirth scene with the mother lying on the left and a nurse with her hair loose receiving the baby on the right.
The next scene shows a toddler in a short tunic taking his early steps behind a massive-looking baby-walker, *i.e.* the second of two stages of *infantia*; the *puer* in the next medallion has a bow and quiver as his attributes. The fourteenth-century depiction of the seven Ages of Man in Longthorpe Tower near Peterborough represents *infantia* as a swaddled child in a rocking cradle. In the window at Canterbury Cathedral the *infans* is only distinguished by its size and white swaddling clothes, without any other attribute; in contrast, *pueritia* has been given a ball and a stick to characterize him. There is no swaddled infant in the initial to 'Etas' in the fourteenth-century manuscript *Omne bonum*, which is confined to three different stages of childhood only; here the toddler in the baby-walker and the boy with the whip top are shown as equal in size. Size again is disproportionate in the depiction of *infantia* as a huge crawling figure in the fourteenth-century leaf from Munich, where only the figure's nakedness indicates his infant status.

It will have become clear that there were variations not just between the different schemes of the Ages but also between the main text and the accompanying illustrations; the terms *infans* and *puer* are also not always as strictly delineated as one would expect from such a wide-spread theme and the visual presentations of both may thus vary. One variation was the Tree of Life, which can be found in the *Concordantia caritatis* by Ulrich von Lilienfeld, dating from the second half of the fourteenth century. The original manuscript in the Stiftsbibliothek Lilienfeld (Codex 151, f. 257v) is interesting in that it shows the naked newborn in his recumbent mother's arms ('nascens'), the sucking *infans*, and the *puer* as a little boy in a robe whom his mother is leading by the hand; thus, the first three of the twelve Ages are presented as still in the mother's care. However, the visual image of a tree should really show only an upward growth and medieval artists often preferred a visual presentation that would logically illustrate the development of Man from infant to adulthood, as well as the decline into old age; the location of the Ages of Man around the arch of the north window recess in Longthorpe Tower allowed the painter to show this development quite clearly. However, a more popular device was the complete Wheel of Life, such as we have seen in the De Lisle Psalter; this was sometimes combined with the Wheel of Fortune, rather like the much earlier version by William de Brailes. This type appeared in Germany in the fifteenth century where it was presented in illuminations as well as print as

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44 Sears (1986) plate 65.
2. THE NATURE OF INFANCY

the *Rota vitae alias fortunae*. Interestingly, in these seven-Age versions the *infans*, labelled *generatio*, is the familiar infant in its cradle but *pueritia* is now a much younger child, wearing a young boy's shift and riding a hobby-horse in an illuminated didactic miscellany of the first quarter of the fifteenth century (London, Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, MS 49, f. 30v); another wheel in a German fortune-telling manuscript of the third quarter of the fifteenth century shows a similar iconography. A woodcut of c. 1460 from the Middle-Rhine area, which was discovered pasted inside the covers of an edition of Nicholas de Lyra's *Moralia super bibliam* and now kept in the British Museum (BL, IC. 35), shows another such Wheel of Life; here the naked representation of *pueritia* looks remarkably like yet another one for *infantia*. The first age, labelled 'Infans ad vii annos', is already represented by a swaddled infant in a rocking cradle and by the approaching naked infant who looks like a toddler; the figure above, labelled 'Puericia ad xv annos', is yet another chubby naked boy accompanied by a small dog. This latter figure is confusing as the traditional *puer* is usually a fully dressed boy with a more appropriate toy; the windmill is a more typical attribute for the toddler.

Because human life is so obviously characterized by a rise, followed by a decline, artists were tempted to visualize this symmetrically. The idealized figure of *adolescens* or *iuvenis* with his falcon tends to be close to the top, representing both the bloom of human life and an image of the perfect age at the Resurrection, as we shall see below. However, the symmetry is most obvious in the two extremes of human existence: childhood and old age. In the woodcut of c. 1460, the *infans*-like *puer* with his frivolous attribute is not only shown facing, but actually pointing at, the figure of *senectus*, bent almost double across his attribute, the vital walking-stick; similarly, the infant in his cradle and the corpse in his grave are mirror images. Not only are 'nascens' and 'mortuus' mirrored in Ulrich von Lilienfeld's manuscript but the sucking infant has his counterpart in the naked infant-like soul that leaves the mouth of 'moriens'. In the Wellcome Institute's Wheel of Life the naked infant in his rocking cradle is also matched by the bare and decaying corpse;

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47 Sears (1986) 151.
49 Jones (1853) 186-89 and plate; also mentioned in Sears (1986) 151.
50 See below, chapter 3 and also Cornelia Löhmer, *Die Welt der Kinder im fünfzehnten Jahrhundert* (Weinheim, 1989) 157-59. Löhmer, pl. 47, depicts a detail of the *pueritia* figure in a slightly different version of this printed Wheel, which she describes as originating from the Middle-Rhine area around 1410. According to Löhmer, the hobby-horse - attribute of *pueritia* in the two German manuscript versions of the Wheel - is equally an attribute of early childhood; the same applies to the (near-)nudity of the little boys.
they are linked together by an angel's outstretched arms.\textsuperscript{51} Visually somewhat less obvious is the mirroring of the first and last Ages of Man in a short fifteenth-century moralistic poem \textit{Of \text{je seuen} Ages}, consisting of sixty lines in rhyming couplets with illustrations, which starts with the figure of the \textit{infans} squeezed in almost as an afterthought between the heading and the crucial illustration of the child standing between an angel and a devil.\textsuperscript{52} The infant lies naked within a square frame, as if mirroring his eventual naked state on his deathbed on the facing page, while a crude set of lines link the image with the matching text: 'Nakyd in to \text{his warlide borne am I}' (l. 3). Already the angel and devil are at hand with their warnings for this is clearly a moralistic work; the infant \textit{may} live to progress to a more mature and perfect physical state but in the end death, corruption and Judgement await us all.

\textbf{BIOLGICAL AND PHYSIOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF \textit{INFANTIA}}

According to the theories about the Ages of Man, each of these distinct phases was believed to have its own specific physiological characteristics. In his sixth book 'De etate hominis', Bartholomeus Anglicus introduced death in his second \textit{capitulum} after expounding the seven Ages; immediately following is his \textit{capitulum} 'De creacione infantis'.\textsuperscript{53} The awareness that life starts not at birth but at conception carried its own theological implications but we shall first look at the physiological aspects of conception.

\textbf{Conception}

To the detriment of developments in science and medicine, throughout the medieval period Aristotle's theories remained the most influential and it was his ideas about the nature of procreation that determined the way in which people viewed the roles that men and women played in this process. Although there is a long history of medieval medical writing, both in Latin and in the vernacular,\textsuperscript{54} the fact remains that virtually all these works were written by men and rarely, if ever, read or

\textsuperscript{51} This visual connection was noted by Sears (1986) 151: 'The message is clear. We come into being and pass away, ending where we began, our lives a vanity'.

\textsuperscript{52} See Bowers (1952); Burrow (1988) 46-47 and pl. 8. The poem can be found in BL MS Add. 37049, f. 28v-29.


consulted by women.\textsuperscript{55} Therefore, medical writings tell us more about the theories current among scholars of the time than about actual practical experience, especially with regard to childbirth which was still very much the exclusive concern of midwives. To gain some insight into medieval medical thinking, it will be useful to look at the descriptions of conception and birth in one of the most popular works of the time, Bartholomaeus Anglicus' encyclopaedic \textit{De proprietatibus rerum} as translated by John Trevisa.

In accordance with established tradition, Bartholomaeus Anglicus based himself on Aristotle's authority when he proudly introduced the subject of Man's 'generacioun and getinge': 'For his makynge and creacioun is more excellent \textit{yanne} makinge of o\textit{hir} beestis be so moche as man is more worthi \textit{yan} o\textit{hir} bestis, nou\textit{t} onliche in verrey soule but also in most temperat complexioun of body'.\textsuperscript{56} However, he also drew on other authoritatives such as Galen, Hippocrates and Constantinus Africanus in his chapter 'De creacione infantis', which deals not only with conception but also with the development of the male foetus. The female foetus is of less interest to Bartholomaeus: 'But here I passe for to spede shortliche, takynge hede hereto \textit{pat} a female is more slowly fourmed and ischape atte fulle \textit{yanne} a knaue childe ther, for \textit{pe} seed \textit{pat} \textit{pe} male come\textit{p} of is more strong and more hoot and in hotter place ifonge \textit{yanne} \textit{pe} seed \textit{pat} female come\textit{p} of'.\textsuperscript{57} A male child is formed in the mother's right side out of 'matter \textit{seminalis}', which is a mixture of the hot and thick blood of the father and the mother's 'contrarie' blood; a female child will develop in the mother's left side.\textsuperscript{58} It was commonly thought that the foetus was fed with menstrual blood, which after birth would be transformed into milk for the baby; however, this meant that breast-milk would inevitably deteriorate in quality if the mother conceived again and required this same substance to nourish the new foetus.\textsuperscript{59} Bartholomaeus describes how the child develops in four 'degrees': first when the seed resembles milk, secondly when it turns into blood-like substance but without the organs being properly formed, and thirdly when the heart, brain and liver are complete although the other parts of the body 'ben vnschaplyche and nou\textit{t} distingwed'.\textsuperscript{60} The second degree is called 'fetus by Ypocras speche', according to Bartholomaeus; whereas the fourth and


\textsuperscript{56} Seymour (1975) vol. 1, concluding paragraph of book 6.2, 294.

\textsuperscript{57} Seymour (1975) vol. 1, book 6.3, 297.

\textsuperscript{58} Seymour (1975) vol. 1, book 6.3, 294, 296.

\textsuperscript{59} Seymour (1975) vol. 1, book 6.3, 295; see also the section of infant care below and the discussion in Williamson (1996) esp. chapter 7 'Attitudes towards breast-feeding: theory and practice'.

\textsuperscript{60} Seymour (1975) vol. 1, book 6.3, 296.
last degree 'is whenn alle þe membres ben iche even ischaþe, and þis degre is clepid *infans* of Ypocras'.\(^{61}\) It seems, then, that the term *infans* is not just used for the child once born, and lasting up to the age of seven, but also for the fully formed foetus in the womb. For Bartholomaeus this is the moment, after forty-six days, when the *infans* 'fongijþ soul and lif, and bigynneþ to meue itself and sprawle, and puttiþ wiþ feet and hondes'.\(^{62}\) In general, the theological belief was that the male foetus was ready to receive his soul on the fortieth day after conception and the female foetus only after eighty days; these numbers were probably based on Leviticus 12.\(^{63}\)

Although medieval encyclopaedias and medical handbooks presented conception as a scientific process, at least in terms of theories current at the time, from a theological point of view conception was the result of physical intercourse and thus tainted by sin. The link is shown quite explicitly twice in an illuminated French manuscript of Aristotle's *De animalibus* from the late thirteenth century now at Merton College, Oxford (MS 271): both the initial and the lower border at the beginning of book IX illustrate a coupling pair followed by a woman with an infant. Thus, man is visibly conceived in the sin of lust, as echoed in the Middle-English morality play *Mundus et Infans* when Infans introduces himself:

> Now, seemly, sirs behold on me
> How mankind doth begin:
> I am a child, as you may see,
> Gotten in game and in great sin. (ll. 28-31)\(^{64}\)

Small wonder, then, that Christian theologians devised the dogma of an immaculate conception not just for Christ himself but also for the Virgin Mary, whose chaste conception by a kiss exchanged by her parents Anna and Joachim at the Golden Gate was so frequently depicted by artists. In late-medieval art and drama, the Virgin's conception of Christ was sometimes visualized not by the descent of the Holy Ghost in Annunciation scenes but by the diminutive figure of a fully formed Christ child, complete with crucifix, descending upon the Virgin on a sunbeam; the

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\(^{61}\) Seymour (1975) vol. 1, book 6.3, 296. Note that the term 'embrio' is used by Bartholomaeus, 295, to describe the placenta.


\(^{64}\) See G A Lester (ed.), *Three Late Medieval Morality Plays: Mankind, Everyman, Mundus et Infans* (London, 1981) 112 and also introduction xiii, xv. The unique early printed version by Wynkyn de Worde dates from 1522 although the play seems to be based on a late fourteenth or early fifteenth-century poem of the Ages of Man; cf. 'In game he is bigoten in synne' (l. 3) of 'The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life' in Frederick J Furnivall (ed.), *Hymns to the Virgin & Christ, The Parliament of Devils, and other Religious Poems, chiefly from the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lambeth MS. No. 853, EETS, o.s. 24* (London, 1867, repr. 1895) 58.
most famous example is probably the central panel of the Mérode altarpiece of the
1430s in the Cloisters Museum in New York, ascribed to Robert Campin, but it can
also be observed in a fifteenth-century stained-glass panel in the church of St Peter
Mancroft, Norwich.65

Superstitions regarding the miracle of conception abounded, and vestiges of
them survive in fairy-tales in which evil stepmothers or mothers-in-law accuse
young mothers of having given birth to animals or monsters. Similar tales
proliferated in medieval romances, such as the Middle-English Chevelere Assigne
of the late fourteenth century, based on an earlier French version about a 'chevalier
au cygne', in which animals are substituted for newborn septets by a wicked and
jealous mother-in-law.66 There are also several examples of this motif in English
literature, e.g. in the romance Emaré, but the most famous example is probably the
Man of Law's tale of Custance in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, where the mother-
in-law writes to her son that the heroine

\[ \ldots \text{delivered was} \]
\[ \text{Of so horrible a feendly creature} \]
\[ \text{That in the castel noon so hardy was} \]
\[ \text{That any while dorste ther endure. (ll. 750-53)67} \]

With all these stories, it is important to remember that such deception could only
work as a device if there was a general belief that women could indeed give birth
not just to deformed children but even to monsters, and contemporary 'scientific'
thought only confirmed this idea. The female of the species was considered in
general to be particularly susceptible to the effect of visual influences, as the
Bestiary author knew only too well; after all, ewes, mares and pigeons were
known to produce offspring in accordance with the image they saw while mating:

For the same reason, many people think that pregnant women should not look
at ugly beasts such as apes and monkeys, in case they should bring children into
the world who resemble these caricatures. For women's nature is such that they
produce offspring according to the image they see or have in mind at the
moment of ecstasy as they conceive.68

65 For the Mérode altarpiece, see Maryan W Ainsworth and Keith Christiansen (eds), From Van
Eyck to Bruegel: Early Netherlandish Painting in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York,
1998) cat. 2; also Gail McMurray Gibson, The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and
Society in the Late Middle Ages (Chicago/London, 1989, repr. 1994) 146ff for a discussion of
Christ's incarnation thus made visible both in art and on the stage.
66 Walter Hoyt French and Charles Brockway Hale (eds), Middle English Metrical Romances
1983).
68 Barber (1993) 106; this belief lasted well beyond the Middle Ages.
Of course, abnormal births did occur, for whatever reason. The miracle book of Our Lady at Bois-le-Duc ('s-Hertogenbosch) records that in 1383 after a nine-day delivery Aleyt, wife of Jan Lumper from Susteren, gave birth to a stillborn child 'velc kijnt ghenen mensche en gheleec, sonder dat nase ende mond had'; the miracle consisted of Aleyt's recovery from her illness following this traumatic event, for which she came to give thanks on 21 April 1383.\(^{69}\) Abnormal births were bound to excite curiosity, of course, and came to be publicized as historical freaks in prints from the fifteenth century onwards. In 1493 the German edition of the Nuremberg Chronicle recorded on the same page both the unusual birth of 'ein wundergestallten leoben' to a noblewoman in the 'costnitzer bistthumb' and an example of Siamese twins:

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\text{In obem schwaben ist ein monstrum in der statt Esslingen (als man sagt) von einem weibe geporn. von dem nabel auff zwu prust unnd zway hawbt gegen einander sich ansehennde. vier arm sich vmbfangent. auch zwu schame gehabt. das ist von stund an nach seiner gepurt gestorben.}\]^{70}\]

Another miracle from Bois-le-Duc relates how on 8 March 1383 Mechtelt, wife of Bartholomeus Steenmetssers, arrived at the church from Haarlem to offer her shift, a candle equalling herself in length and a wax figure in fulfilment of her vow after her recovery from a fifteen-week illness following the birth of a stillborn twin and the delivery three weeks later of the second dead twin, 'enen doeden kijnde, een munstrum'.\(^{71}\)

Even women who gave birth to normal human babies were not immune from superstition for, as medieval romances suggest, twins might be regarded with some suspicion or even seen as evidence of adultery on the part of the mother.\(^{72}\) In Marie de France's *Lai le Fresne* of c. 1170-80 a noblewoman thus accuses a

\[^{69}\] H Hens, H van Bavel, G C M van Diick and J H M Frantzen, *Mirakelen van Onze Lieve Vrouw te 's-Hertogenbosch 1381-1603* (Tilburg, 1978) no. 45. Transl.: 'which child did not resemble a human being except that it had a nose and a mouth'.

\[^{70}\] See Schedel (1978) f. 217. Transl.: In Upper Schwabia in the city of Esslingen (as is told) a woman gave birth to a monster, having from the navel upwards two chests and two heads looking at one another, four arms embracing each other, also two pudenda, which died an hour after its birth. Other examples of monstrsities are shown on f. 182v and f. 198, the latter also shown and discussed in Löhmer (1989) 58-58 but esp. 53-54. See also Laurent (1989) pls 51-54; Eugen Holländer, *Wunder, Wundergeburt und Wundergestalt in Einblattdrucken des fünfzehnten bis achtzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart, 1921) for further examples, including (pp. 69-70) mention of a chronicle report on a pair of musically talented Siamese twins patronized by the Scottish king Buchanan in c. 1490.

\[^{71}\] Hens et al. (1978) no. 26.

\[^{72}\] The idea that twins were generally the result of an adulterous union was suggested by Pliny; see Beryl Rowland and Margaret Jennings, 'Unheavenly Twins', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 85 (1984) 111. The theme of multiple births in medieval literature was studied by Erik S Kooper in 'Multiple Births and Multiple Disaster: Twins in Medieval Literature', in Keith Busby and Norman J Lacy (eds), *Conjunctures: Medieval Studies in Honor of Douglas Kelly* (Amsterdam, 1994) 253-69, and subsequently in 'Moeders en meerlingen in de middeleeuwse letterkunde', *Madoc* 11:4 (December 1997) 228-35.
neighbour of adultery with the comment that it takes two men to make a woman conceive twins:

Unques ne fu ne ja nen iert  
Ne n'avendrat cele aventure  
Qu'a une sule porteüre  
Une femme deus enfanz eit,  
Si dui humme ne li unt feit. (ll. 38-42)\textsuperscript{73}

As a result, when she herself gives birth to twin girls she has one of them abandoned out of shame in an elm tree (\textit{fresne}), which lends its name both to the foundling girl and to the \textit{lai}. Similarly, in the Middle-English romance \textit{Chevelere Assigne}, the childless queen Bewtrys observes to her husband Oryens who wistfully watches a beggarwoman with twins:

Oon manne for oon chylde . and two wymmen for tweyne,  
Or ellis hit were vnsemelye ñynge . as me wolde þenke,  
But eche chylde hadde a fader . how manye so þer were. (ll. 29031)\textsuperscript{74}

The king immediately rebukes his wife for her words, which is just as well as 'he gette on here þat same nyȝte . resonabullye many' so that she subsequently gives birth to 'sex semelye sonnes and a dowȝter'. Of course, the outcome of these romances make it clear that such accusations are based on superstition. Still, this lingering tradition is probably the reason why some romance authors specifically inform their readers that the hero's twin children are equally fair or even that they \textit{both} resemble their father, as in the Middle-English romance \textit{Sir Torrent of Portyngale}, written c. 1400, where we are told that the hero's wife is delivered 'of male children two. / In all points they were gent / And like they were to Sir Torrent'.\textsuperscript{75}

Against accusations of adultery in cases of multiple births, there was a medieval 'scientific' explanation for twins or septets in particular, which was developed at the famous medical school of Salerno; misinterpreting ancient observations that the female genitalia consist of a vagina and a uterus as two separate components, medieval scholars came to believe that the womb itself contained two or even seven separate compartments - in the latter case there would be three on the right for male foetuses, three on the left for females, and one in the

\textsuperscript{73} Jean Rychner (ed.), \textit{Les Lais de Marie de France}, Les Classiques Français du Moyen Age (Paris, 1966). Transl: It has never happened that a woman was delivered of two children in one birth, nor will it ever happen, unless two men have made it so.
\textsuperscript{74} French and Hale (1964).
\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Sir Torrent of Portyngale}, ii. 1809-11, as quoted by Kooper (1997) 228.
middle for hermaphrodites. And whereas septets may already seem an abundance, the most sensational case of multiple births is undoubtedly the Dutch story of how in 1276 countess Margaret of Holland accused a beggar-woman with twins of adultery; the woman then cursed the countess, who in due course was herself delivered of 364 or even 365 babies - 'alsoe veel kinderen alser dage int ier siin', according to a mid fourteenth-century chronicler. Margaret and all her offspring are said to have died after a hasty baptism in the font at the church of Loosduinen, which remained a tourist attraction for centuries.

Obviously, conception was still a mysterious event which medical thinking in the Middle Ages failed to explain satisfactorily; no wonder, then, that people turned to religion as well as other desperate remedies when women failed to conceive or to give birth to healthy (or male) children. The relief at finally obtaining a male heir is evident not only in a miniature in a manuscript of the *Grandes chroniques de France*, in which Christ above hands down a symbolically diminutive crowned and sceptred representation of the long-awaited heir Philip Augustus to the kneeling king Louis VII of France and his third wife Adèle de Champagne below, but also in the child's sobriquet: 'Dieudonné'. Conception was just the beginning; pregnancy, birth and the vulnerable phase of early infancy carried further risks.

**Pregnancy, birth and infant care**

Pregnancy was a blessed, if hazardous, state for women and one which they shared with the most idealized of women, the Virgin Mary herself. Early medical authors, like the Greek author Soranus of Ephesus in the second century AD, had already written advice on the care that should be given to pregnant women to ensure a successful term and delivery. Whereas Bartholomaeus Anglicus confined

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76 See Kooper (1997) 232-34; Laurent (1989) pl. 6. In book 5.49 Bartholomaeus Anglicus mentions just two compartments, with possibly a third in the middle in which the hermaphrodite are conceived; see Seymour (1975) vol. 1, 264.

77 See Kooper (1997) 230-31 and note 1. Transl.: as many children as there are days in the year. Stith Thompson, *The Folktale* (1946, repr. Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 1977) 269 records a similar tale as type L.432.2.1, mentioning that it was widely known in the Middle Ages.


79 The miniature can be found in an illuminated copy of the chronicle presented to Philip III in or shortly after 1274 (Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève MS 782, f. 208). Philip Augustus was born in 1165 after his father's earlier marriages to Eleanor of Aquitaine and Constance of Castile had only resulted in the births of four daughters; see John W Baldwin, *The Government of Philip Augustus: Foundations of French and Royal Power in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, 1986).

80 Soranus, whose work was to influence later medical writers like Muscio, devoted a whole chapter to this subject in book 1.14 of his *Gynaecia*; see Owsei Temkin (transl.), Soranus' *Gynecology* (1956, repr. Baltimore/London, 1991).
himself to observations on the discomforts suffered by pregnant women - which
are worse if she carries a female child81 - other authors specified what food and
drink women should choose and also that they should not bathe too often.82 It is
even possible to find practical advice, e.g. that expectant mothers should avoid
heavy work, in some medieval religious treatises such as the *Oculus sacerdotis*,
reputedly written by William of Pagula in the early fourteenth century.83 John
Mirk (or Myrc), canon of Lilleshall in Shropshire around 1400, confined himself to
the women's spiritual welfare when he instructed parish priests that they 'moste
hem [pregnant women] teche how þey schule do'; his advice concerns women's
need for confession and communion 'for drede of perele that may be-falle, / In here
trauelynge that come schalle'.84

The most obvious images of pregnant women in medieval art are those of the
Virgin and St Elizabeth, particularly in Visitation scenes. Indeed, in some fifteenth-
century depictions Elizabeth is shown wearing the typical type of laced dress which
could be let out to allow for the increase in the expectant woman's girth; not only
in stained-glass windows at East Harling and St Peter Mancroft in Norwich can
such dresses be seen but also on some brasses of women who died in childbirth,
like that of Anne Astley, née à Wode (died 1512) and her swaddled twins at
Blickling, Norfolk. In some rarer religious examples, the foetus is also shown in
the womb; particularly early examples can be found in German art,85 e.g. in an
initial on f. 176v of a Cistercian gradual from the first half of the fourteenth
century now in Karlsruhe (Badische Landesbibliothek, codex LIH1), which shows both
women with a haloed naked figure between their breasts. As one might expect, the
figure of St John on the right displays a reverential pose with joint hands while the
little figure of Christ is distinguished not just by his cruciform halo but also his
gesture of blessing. In the Schotten altarpiece of 1390 in Germany the positions of
the two women are reversed but otherwise the foetuses in their wombs are shown
in similar poses.86 On f. 387v of the Mayer Van den Bergh breviary, produced in
the early sixteenth century by a team of major illuminators of the Ghent-Bruges

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82 See the section 'Le régime des femmes enceintes' in Laurent (1989) 126-32.
84 Edward Peacock (ed.), *Instructions for Parish Priests by John Myrc*, EETS, o.s. 31 (1868, revised London, 1902) II. 81 and 83-84.
85 Although not actually showing foetuses, the pregnancies of Mary and Elizabeth are indicated by the
insertion of transparent crystals representing their wombs in a thirteenth-century sculpted
visitation group from Katharinental, illustrated in Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and
6.3.
86 Illustrated in Newman (1996) fig. 68.
school, it is St Anne who displays the foetus of the Virgin in a gold circle across her stomach.\(^{87}\)

While the Virgin's pregnant condition is not often shown quite so clearly in medieval art, there was an abundance of foetus diagrams in medical handbooks throughout the Middle Ages, all following the same models: usually in sixteen diagrams, the various positions of foetuses in the womb are illustrated with matching descriptions, the last two showing twins.\(^{88}\) Although these diagrams continued to be copied in medical handbooks throughout the medieval period, it is doubtful whether they were ever consulted by mothers or midwives, as mentioned earlier; the early attribution of one medical treatise, *De passionibus mulierum curandarum*, to Trotula, a famous twelfth-century physician and widwife from Salerno, has long been rejected.\(^{89}\) The reality of childbirth was almost solely a matter for women who instead relied on common practice and experience. Such was the taboo on male presence at childbirth that when in the Middle-English *Romance of Sir Beues of Hamtoun* the hero's wife Josiane is forced to give birth to twins alone in the forest, her modesty forbids her to have her husband or his friend Terry near to assist her:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Leue sire, jow go þe wai,} \\
\text{Gor for-bede for is pite,} \\
\text{Þat no wimman is priuite} \\
\text{To noman þour me be kouþe.}^{90}
\end{align*}
\]

As for midwives, Bartholomaeus Anglicus does not tell us much more in his short chapter 'De obstetrice' than that she must possess 'craft' to help the mother give birth with 'þe lasse woo and sorwe' and that she comfort the mother by anointing her womb.\(^{91}\) Perhaps the usual exclusion of men from childbirth somehow hampered the depiction of childbirth scenes in art as these are not only often quite unanatomical but also frequently suggest breech births as the norm; convention may have taken precedence over actual observation.

Childbirth was a traumatic experience and frequently proved fatal either for mother or child or both. In the Middle-English morality play *Mundus et Infans* the character of Infans explains that

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\(^{87}\) Hans Nieuwdorp and Brigitte Dekeyzer (eds), *Breviarium Mayer van den Berg: Alle miniaturen* (Ghent, 1997) 53.

\(^{88}\) For a complete set of diagrams, see Laurent (1989) pl. 31; see also the discussion in chapter 1.


\(^{90}\) Eugen Kolbing (ed.), *The Romance of Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, EETS, e.s. 46 (London, 1885-95) ll. 3628-31; they clearly wander too far 'for hii ne myte hire paines here' so that the newly delivered Josiane is promptly abducted.

\(^{91}\) Seymour (1975) vol. 1, book 6.10, 305.
40 weeks my mother me found [maintained, bore];
Flesh and blood my food was tho;
When I was ripe from her to found [depart],
In peril of death we stood, both two. (ll. 32-35)

This text illustrates some of the beliefs held about childbirth in the Middle Ages, such as the idea that the foetus feeds on the mother's flesh and blood. That pregnancy and childbirth could be lethal for both mother and child was recognized by other writers as well:

pe child is pe modris deedli foo;
Or pei be fulli partide on twyne,
In perelle of deed ben bore two. (ll. 4-7)

For those mothers and babies who survived the ordeal of childbirth, the dangers were far from over. For mothers there was the all too common risk of infection during or long after the birth, which could prove fatal: Soranus' advice that the midwife should cut short the nail of her left forefinger before inserting it into the uterus, and also rub her hands with warm oil, but preferably not oil that had already been used for cooking, suggests an awareness of possible dangers but also partly illustrates the scope for infection. Complications during birth could also prove fatal for the mother and she might also still die from septicaemia or puerperal fever afterwards; caesarean section was only performed as a means of saving the child once the mother had already died, or was believed to be dead.

Bartholomaeus Anglicus and other authors advised that the birth chamber should not be too hot or cold as extreme temperatures would affect the newborn whose flesh is but 'tendir, neische, quavy, and vnsad'. After birth the baby was to be cleansed with salt (mixed with honey, rose petals, or oil), then bathed and anointed; this ritual bath can often be found in medieval art, e.g. in depictions of the birth of the Virgin. Bright lights are to be avoided to spare the newborn's eyesight. As for feeding the baby, the mother's first milk was the be avoided; unaware of the vital ingredients of this colostrum, people felt that it was not suitable as milk because the blood that had fed the foetus in the womb had not yet been properly transformed into breast milk and because the mother herself was considered to be still physically too weak and agitated, according to the theories

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92 'The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life' in Furnivall (1895) 58.
current at the time, thus unable to produce healthy milk. Soranus even advocated not feeding the newborn for up to two days so that it might digest and excrete the sustenance it had had in the womb, i.e. the newborn's first, dark meconium that was viewed with great suspicion; its first food had better be moderately boiled honey. Honey was already to be used immediately after birth to clean the newborn's palate and gums but also to whet its appetite, as Bartholomaeus Anglicus explained: 'Panne þe roof of þe mouþ and gomez schulde be frotid with a fingir iwette in hony, to clense and comforte þe inner partye of þe mouþ, and also to excite and cense þe childes appetite wiþ swetnes and sharpenes of þe hony.' It is not unlikely that infants were fed substances other than milk for the first few days after birth. Not only do childbirth scenes, such as the many depictions of the Virgin's birth in medieval art, often include a servant warming something in a small pot on the fire but scenes in art of Joseph cooking food in a small pan at the Nativity suggest that he thus is fulfilling his (step-)paternal role as Christ's provider; in the Nativity play from Hessen of c. 1450-60, Joseph has some trouble persuading the rather cantankerous female servants to make 'eyn brib' to feed the Christ child. Some medical authors actually recommended honey as a purgative for expelling meconium. 

Otherwise, milk is recommended as the most suitable food for newborn babies by authors like Raymond Lull and Bartholomaeus Anglicus; the latter especially warned against 'euel melk' that might affect the baby's health. As we have seen, it is also specifically mentioned in the Wheel of Life in the De Lisle Psalter. Medieval authors generally stressed that the mother's own milk should be preferred, with Bartholomaeus explaining that because the child had previously been fed in the womb with his mother's 'blood menstrual' which subsequently

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96 For an early view on food for the newborn, see Soranus, book 2.11, in Temkin (1991) 88-89. It may be interesting to note that, according to discussions with a midwife active in the Midlands, there is still a taboo on colostrum among traditional Asian women.


98 Alexandre-Bidon and Closson (1985) 131, colour plates and the illustration on p. 132 of the swaddled newborn Virgin in her rocking cradle, surrounded by angels one of whom is stirring the contents of a small pan with a ladle, from a painting of c. 1490 in the Staatliche Museen, Berlin. The miniature pot hanging from Joseph's staff in Melchior Broederlam's the Flight into Egypt panel for the late fourteenth-century Crucifixion retable, now in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Dijon, was probably also intended to emphasize Joseph's responsibility for the Christ child's additional food.

99 See R Fronig (ed.), Das hessische Weihnachtsspiel in Das Drama des Mittelalters, 3 vols. (Stuttgart, 1891-92) vol. 3, 928, II. 617; this edition will be used for further quotations from this play.

100 Étienne (1973) 35, based on Oribasius.

101 Lull (1969) 205: 'Au comencement quant l'enfant est [né], tant qu'il a prise force et chalor naturel, il ne doit estre norri fors de [lait] tant seulement; quar autre viande ne li est convenable, porçe que la chalor naturel [n'est en sa force et ne peut cuire la viande].'

102 Bartholomaeus discussed maternal breast-feeding in books 5.34 'De mamilla', 6.4 'De infantulo' and 6.7 'De matre', and the wetnurse in 6.9 'De nutrice'; see Seymour (1975) vol. 1.
would become milk, ‘de childe is bettir and more kindeliche ifedde wip his owne modir melke þanne wip oþir melke’; advice on how to find a suitable wetnurse was usually included, but rather as a substitute if maternal feeding proved impossible. There is evidence of living-in nurses being employed in royal, and probably also aristocratic, households in medieval England but it is not always clear whether these were actual wetnurses or rather in charge of other tasks within the nursery, such as rocking the cradle. Some writers made much of the fact that they, or their heroes, were breast-fed by their mothers; according to the *Legenda Aurea*, Aleth, mother of St Bernard of Clairvaux, imparted with her milk her virtuous nature to him and his siblings, and in the romance *Blanchardyn and Eglantine*, translated from French by Caxton around 1489, the infant Blanchardyn refuses to be fed by his noble nurse ‘For neuer daye nor owre the childe blanchardyn toke noo fode of none others brestis, but all onely of the quene his modres owne brestis’. Wetnurses were probably employed in some wealthier households and they in their turn would usually have to find others to nurse their own children, which is what one finds in Sir Thomas Malory’s *Morte Darthur* when Merlin suggests to king Uther the wife of Sir Ector as a nurse for the newborn Arthur: ‘And this lord, Sir Ector, let him be sent for for to come and speke with you, and desyre hym yourself, as he loveth you, that he will put his owne child to nourisshynge to another woman and that his wyf nourishe yours’. The idea of professional wetnurses has greatly influenced historical interpretations of childhood in the past, especially for Italy with its wealth of *ricordanze* from the later medieval period onwards but also for north-western Europe in the early modern period; the custom of employing wetnurses, especially when children were sent from cities into the country to be nursed there, has often been interpreted as a sign of parental indifference and almost a form of abandonment. Whereas in Italy the thriving trade in wetnursing services is well documented through diaries and *ricordanze*, no such clear evidence exists for the

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103 Orme (1984) 11ff; see also chapter 3 on the cradle.
English medieval period and it seems probable that in England maternal breast-feeding was still the norm, except in the higher circles of society.  

Shahar claimed that wetnurses were employed not just amongst the nobility but also in the houses of the prosperous middle class, and quoted the example of Margery Kempe, who combined her fourteen children with a career in the brewing and milling business; certainly God's promise to Margery, when she discovered herself pregnant again on the verge of her new mystical career, that he would 'ordeyn for an kepar' is rather suggestive. As mentioned earlier, there was a medical tradition that women who fell pregnant again could no longer provide good milk for suckling infants, their 'menstrual blood' being converted back to the new foetus in the womb; this was the reason why wetnurses were expected to abstain from sexual activity and also, as has been suggested, why parents may have wished to employ wetnurses. In the collection of miracles attributed to St Thomas Cantilupe, we find recorded that in 1307 a fifteen-year-old nutrix Beatrice was employed as nurse to Gilbert, the approximately eighteen-month-old son of the London goldsmith Ralph; Gilbert's mother Alice was well advanced in another pregnancy at the time. Some modern researchers have tried to explain the 'fashion' for wetnurses by claiming social prejudices against maternal feeding in medieval culture but Beth Williamson has recently questioned the idea of such negative connotations; rather than interpreting the Virgo lactans as an image of humility, she concluded from her study of medieval Italian documentation on wetnurses that 'nowhere in the published records is there a reference to breast-feeding being avoided because it was shameful, or recalled the curse of Eve'. Although her research was concentrated on Italy, it seems unlikely that breast-feeding itself was regarded any differently by medieval people in north-western Europe, even when wetnurses were clearly in use in wealthier households. In fact, the idea expressed not only in medical handbooks but also by moralists, that the child's character and health would be influenced by the quality of his feed led to

108 Hanawalt (1993) 56, failed to find evidence of wetnurses in London contracts or wills, except some unspecified references to nurses who may just as well have cared for the sick and dying.  
111 Williamson (1996) chapter 7. According to Monique Somme, 'Le céraméral de la naissance et de la mort de l'enfant pricier à la court de Bourgogne au XVe siècle', in Jean-Marie Cauchies (ed.), A la cour de Bourgogne: Le due, son entourage, son train, Collection Burgundica (Turnhout, 1998) 38, the husband of the ducal wetnurse Gertrude Scurtebiers was paid a daily sum for not seeing his wife.  
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stories about countess Ida of Boulogne, queen Eleanor of Aquitaine and queen Blanche of Castile, who were supposed to have been so adamant in their insistence on breast-feeding their own children that they made their infants disgorge the 'inferior' milk they had been fed by an over-kind nurse. Of course, one could again argue whether stories like these were merely descriptive, relying on commonly accepted practice, or rather prescriptive in trying to persuade people of the superior character of maternal breast-feeding.

Infant development

Whether nursed by their own mothers or by hired wetnurses, medieval infants tended to be breast-fed up to quite an advanced stage unless circumstances necessitated their being weaned sooner, for example if mothers found themselves pregnant again, although nursing may have continued while children were already becoming accustomed to other food. Medical treatises may not provide much evidence about the actual length of breast-feeding but some information may sometimes be gleaned from other sources, such as miracle records; thus we find that Roger, aged twenty-seven months, was being breast-fed by his mother Dionysia after falling in the ditch around Conway Castle in 1303. According to Voragine's *Legenda aurea*, the Virgin Mary was only presented to the Temple when she was three years old and had left sucking; her age corresponds with the first Age of Life in the poem *Ratis Raving*, and three may therefore well have been the outer age limit for a baby to be weaned.

In some respects, the medieval infant may have been later in its development than its modern counterpart, for which both swaddling, nutrition and neglect have

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115 The story of the Blessed Ida, mother of Geoffrey of Bouillon, is recounted by McLaughlin in *deMause* (1980) 116 and n. 64; the story of king Richard's mother is found as a topos in *Tubach* (1969) no. 3283; the similar story of Blanche, mother of St Louis, is mentioned in Morris Bishop, *The Pelican Book of the Middle Ages* (1968, repr. Harmondsworth, 1983) 133, albeit without references to the source.

116 Although Williamson (1996) dismissed the idea that the image of the *Virgo lactans* might carry any negative connotations, she did not commit herself to any underlying exemplary or 'prescriptive' purposes to this type of Virgin, which became hugely popular from the thirteenth century on; see also her article 'The Virgin *Lactans* as Second Eve: Image of the *Salvatrix*', *Studies in Iconography* 19 (1998) 105-38.

117 Finucane (1997) 129.

118 Graesse (1965) cap. 131, 588: 'Completo igitur per triennium ablactationis tempore ad templum domini virginem cum oblationibus adduxerunt'. See also William Caxton's *Golden Legend*, printed by Wynkyn de Worde (London, 1498) f. 246: 'And thenne whan that she hadde accomplisshed the tyme of three yere / and hadde lefte soukynge [...]'. The fact that the Virgin looks much older in scenes of her Presentation to the Temple in which she ascends the fifteen steps, as remarked by Hall (1995) 252, makes her not so much a mere 'miniature adult' but rather a *puella senex* as befitting her special status and the occasion.

119 See Urban T Holmes, 'Medieval Children', *Journal of Social History* 2 (1968) 165, quoting further examples from French literature.
been blamed, but this is hard to prove.\textsuperscript{120} However, the overall weakness of the human infant was often stressed by medieval writers. In the dialogue \textit{Vices and Virtues} of c. 1200, the Christ child is described thus:

and he ðe is godes wisdom, ðurh hwam bieð alle wittes and ðelle wisdomes and alle tungen spekinde, he lai alswa ðat child ðe nan god ne cann, ne speken ne mai, ne isien, ne him seluen wealden, ðurh hwam alle earen þeihiereð, and alle menn hem seluen welden, and alle eijene isieð.\textsuperscript{121}

In other words, omnipotent God allowed his son to assume that most humble state of \textit{infantia} when Man cannot speak or see or think or control his own feeble body.

As we have seen, according to traditional physiological thought, \textit{infantia} was regarded as the age when children were not yet articulate. Bartholomaeus Anglicus described it thus, basing himself on Isidore of Seville's etymological explanation of the word \textit{infans}:

And suche a child hatte \textit{infans} in latyn, þat is to mene 'nouȝt spekynghe', for he may nouȝt speke noȝr sowne his wordes profitabliche, for here teef be nouȝtȝet parfitliche igrowe and isette in ordere. So seijþ Isidre.\textsuperscript{122}

By the age of seven the child might be able to speak articulately; it was the earlier stage of learning to talk that characterized the \textit{infans}. Encouraging a baby's first words requires interaction with adults, and this had long been known. Famous is the account by the thirteenth-century friar Salimbene de Adam, who in his \textit{Chronica} tells the apocryphal story how emperor Frederick II tried an experiment to discover what language infants might start to speak naturally - whether Hebrew, Greek, Latin or Arabic - if raised by nurses who were forbidden to talk to them or make any other encouraging sounds;\textsuperscript{123} sadly, but not surprisingly, the experiment failed for the infants all died. This tale may be apocryphal and even date back to Herodotus but important is that Salimbene recognized the fact that infants are not merely soothed by words and lullabies but actually depend on such adult attention for their survival: 'Non enim vivere possent sine applausu et gestu et letitia faciei et

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\textsuperscript{120} For example, deMause (1980) 50. Lipton \textit{et al.} (1965) noted that swaddled infants in their experiments tended to sleep more and were less easily startled; although no striking differences in development were discovered between swaddled and unswaddled children, rural Japanese children restrained in \textit{ejiko} baskets and left alone for longer periods in dark closed rooms were found to be later in developing their walking skills.

\textsuperscript{121} Ferd. Holthausen (ed.), \textit{Vices and Virtues, being a Soul's Confession of its Sins with Reason's Description of the Virtues} (BL MS Stowe 240), EETS, o.s. 89 (London, 1888) 49-51.

\textsuperscript{122} Seymour (1975) vol. 1, book 6.1, 291.

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blanditiis baiularum et nutricum suarum'. Although few medieval mothers or nurses would have known this story or read medical handbooks, there can be little doubt that such interaction was a natural and universal phenomenon which authors merely described rather than prescribed. Bartholomaeus Anglicus also mentioned the benefit of lullabies by nurses: 'Alsa þey vsen to singe lullinge[s] and oþir cradil songis to plese þe wittis of þe childe'.124 Possibly the earliest surviving Middle-English lullaby can be found in MS Harley 913, dating from before 1350; its opening line 'Lollai, l[ollai], litil child, whi wepistou sq sore?' is quite typical of the genre.125 Although most other known Middle-English lullabies have religious overtones, as if sung by the Virgin to the Christ child, they are undoubtedly based on lullabies actually sung by mothers and nurses to infants in real life and as such provide further evidence of caring interaction between medieval adults and infants. The soothing nonsense words used in these lullabies were also clearly intended to encourage the child to imitate these sounds.

Baby prattle was regarded as quite characteristic of infantia and could be deliberately imitated in a playful way, as did duke Charles d'Orléans (1394-1465) in a poem that is worth quoting in full:

Quant n'ont assez fait dodo,
Ces petits enfançonnets,
Ils portent soubs leurs bonnets
Visages pleins de bobo.

C'est pitié s'ils font jojo
Trop matin, les doulcinets,
Quant n'ont assez fait dodo,
Ces petits enfançonnets.

Mieux aimassent à gogo
Gesir sur mols coussinet,
Car ils sont tant poupinet;
Hélas! c'est gnogno, gnogno,
Quant n'ont assez fait dodo.126

In addition to the diminutive terms of endearment like 'enfançonnets' and 'doulcinets', there are nonsense words pretending to imitate an infant's attempt to recreate words like dormir ('dodo') although some of these are harder to interpret.127 Similar prattle was also used by medieval authors to suggest

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127 The word 'boboo' is probably related to the early twelfth-century bobee, conventionally glossed as a type of eye disease but here more probably a secretion from the eyes induced by lack of sleep; 'faire jojo' may be connected to joie and here carry a sense of playing. I am grateful to Dr Stewart
inocence, as in the wide-spread story of the little boy who tried to share his apple (or bread) with an image of the Christ child. The story occurs in Vincent de Beauvais' mid thirteenth-century *Speculum Historiale*, book vi, c. 99, and was translated by G G Coulton as follows:

There is a famous city on the Rhine named Speyer, where men worship an image of St Mary, Mother of God, with her child. A little child, while his mother was praying afar, came to this statue with a slide of bread in his hand, and broke off a crumb which he held out to the image of the wailing Child, beseeching it in such words as German children are wont to babble, 'Puppe, pappe! Puppe, pappe!' ['Little boy, eat!' - GGC] At length, when the boy insisted, the image of the almighty Babe is said to have embraced him and addressed him thus, 'Puppe, weep not; within three days thou shalt pappen with Me.' His mother heard and trembled, and related this miracle to the senior canon, who even then came to the spot; and he, considering the matter carefully, replied, 'Take heed! for after the day thus named thou shalt have thy child no more.' The child was seized at once with a fever and died on the third day; wherefore he doth now most undoubtedly feast among the Innocents of Bethlehem.

Whereas the boy's attempt to feed a statue is already a sign of a young child's naivety, his age and character are further defined by his childish language. It is interesting to note that not only is the child's prattle reciprocated by the statue of Christ in the story but the author actually imagines the child as feasting among the Holy Innocents in Heaven, *i.e.* martyred saints close to his own age. In a late thirteenth-century French collection of nine miracles of the Virgin (BN ms. fr. 375, f. 344v), there is another version of the story of the 'enfant qui son pain offri al enfant lymage nostre dame'. Here it takes place in 'une cites molt renomee' and again the child behaves in the same infant-like fashion with words to match:

Li petis enfens en sa main
Tint une leske de blanc pain
Si en brisa une partie
Doner le vaut au fil marie
Il saproisima pres de lymage
Et se le dist en son langage
Pape poupart mangie o moi
Le enfencons le tint tot coi

When at first the image refuses to respond, the child behaves in a characteristic manner by first insisting repeatedly that the Christ child should eat the bread and then starting to cry with frustration; this version reads like a perceptive piece of observation of typical *infans* behaviour. The same story also occurs in two mid fifteenth-century manuscripts of Jean Miélot's collection of *Miracles de la Glorieuse*...
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_Vierge Marie_, both with grisaille illuminations. Headed by the rubric 'Dun petit enfant, qui donna a mengier a lymaige de Jhesus que nostre Dame tenoit', the illumination on f. 29v of MS Douce 374 in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, resembles that on f. 29 of its Parisian counterpart BN ms. fr. 9199 in that it depicts the crucial moment of the story; otherwise they are composed almost as mirror images, with the French miniature clearly of higher quality. Interestingly, both versions show the miraculous image as a painting of the Virgin and Child standing on the floor, within reach of the child, the artist(s) clearly having compromised the 'reality' of the setting with the need to depict the story in a visually logical way. The childish prattle and behaviour described in the text suggest a quite young child; the illuminations show a chubby little boy dressed in a loose shift and hose - still very much an _infans_ of toddler age. All in all, a number of aspects in the different versions of this popular story illustrate a medieval recognition of what small children are naturally like. In addition to the use of baby words in basic imperative style, there is the child's simple belief that the image of the Christ child is actually a real child with whom he can share his food; also typical of the _infans_ are the boy's insistence in pressing his offer on the image and, at least in the version in BN ms. fr. 375, the child's exasperation and tears when his repeated offer is still not accepted. Although the biblical text is not actually quoted, one is reminded of the words of Christ in Matthew 19:14: 'Suffer the little children [parvulos], and forbid them not to come to me: for the kingdom of heaven is for such'.

Apart from talking, infants also have to acquire the art of walking. To judge by its occurrence in William de Brailes' Wheel of Fortune and elsewhere, the baby-walker was a familiar concept in medieval culture although probably not affordable to all; as an iconographical attribute of _infantia_, it will be further discussed in chapter 3. Most children would instead have started their mobility by crawling; Bartholomaeus Anglicus based himself on Aristotle when he claimed that the head and upper part of an infant's body are relatively heavier so that 'jerne in þe bigynnynge of his walkinge a childe crepiþ on feet and hondes and þan afterward he rereþ his body a litil, for þe ouer partye waneþ and worþðþ more liȝt and þe neste parties wexen and encresen and worþþen more heuy'.129 It is this type of naked crawling child that was used to denote _infantia_ by the illuminator of the single leaf now in Munich;130 largely based on Bartholomaeus Anglicus, the Latin text accompanying this first roundel of a six-Age scheme also draws on Aristotle in its description of how mankind crawls on hands and feet as an infant, walks erect as

130 Sears (1986) 130 and pl. 65; although only five Ages are shown, six are actually described in the text, the caption 'Quinque Etates hic infra et conditiones earum' being a fifteenth-century addition.
an adolescent and in his decrepitude is bent again towards the earth to which he shall shortly return.

Whatever medical writings might say, one cannot help but feel that there was a lot of common sense regarding children and their needs amongst people who never would have consulted any handbook. One can come across descriptions of child behaviour in medieval literature that appear strikingly perceptive, as if based on actual observation. In the mid fourteenth-century Middle-English romance *William of Palemer*, based on a Middle-French version dating from the twelfth century, the four-year-old eponymous hero is abducted by Alphonse de Werewolf and left in a cave;¹³¹ although the text describes the child as quite mature and well-grown for his age, he is clearly still an *infans* as the following fragments will show. After venturing out of his cave to gather flowers and grasses, the boy is frightened by a cowherd's dog that starts barking at him:

> [...] it was neiʒ of his witt. wod for fere, and comsed ḷan to crye. so kenly and schille, & wepte so wonder fast. wite ḷou for sothe, Ṽat ḷe son of ḷe cry com. ḷo ḷe cowherde euene, Ṽat ḷe wist witerly it was. ḷe voys of a childe. [ll. 36-40]

Such crying from fright is typical of a small child and shows that here, at least, we have a medieval romance hero who does not behave like a *puer senex*. William flees back into his cave but the cowherd discovers his hiding-place:

> ḷe cherl wondred of ḷat chaunce. & chastised his dogge, bad him blinne of his berking. & to ḷe barn talked, acoyed it to come to him. & clepud hit oft, & foded it wiʃ flores. & wiʃ faire by-hest, & hit it hastely to haue. what it wald ʒerne, appeles & alle ʒinges ḷat childern after wilnen. so, forto seiʒ al ḷe sope. so faire ḷe cherl glosed, Ṽat ḷe child com of ḷe caue. & his criynge stint. ḷe cherl ful cherli ḷat child. tok in his armes, & kest hit & clipped. and oft crist ḷonkes, Ṽat hade him sent ḷo sonde. swiche prey to finde. [ll. 54-64]

This little scene shows a great deal of understanding of, and sympathy for small children;¹³² the cowherd uses soothing words as well as attractive things like apples to entice the little boy out of his cave. Apples were the traditional temptation


¹³² The same scene in the French version, Michelant (1876) ll. 187ff but esp. 203ff, is not quite as detailed but shows a similar tenderness, e.g. when the 'vachiers' finally coaxes the little boy out of his cave: 'tant doucement l'attrait a soi' (l. 211).
for children; Bartholomaeus Anglicus linked them rather with *pueritia* when he wrote that 'pey louen an appil more \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ gold'.\(^{133}\) However, at least one medieval medical author believed the apple to be equally attractive to younger children for the Paduan author Michele Savonarola (d. 1462) recommended that, in order to encourage a toddler to practise walking, one should:

*put him near a wall that is a little farther away, and then throw a box, a purse, an apple, or something else a little distance from him, thus enticing him to walk while looking at it; thereby you will increase little by little the distance covered and make him still more confident in his walking.*\(^{134}\)

However, such increased mobility by being able to crawl and subsequently walk was (and still is) fraught with risks for the child's safety. Barbara Hanawalt and other historians have noted that it is especially the inexperienced toddlers who suffer accidents and death, both because their incipient mobility was often underrated by their parents and carers and because of the child's own lack of balance and awareness of potential dangers. Thus, coroners' inquests and miracle reports tell the often horrific stories of infants wandering off unnoticed to fall victim to accidents in the road, drowning or other dangers around the house; Finucane cited the case of one-year-old Anna Plott in Sheppey, Kent, who while playing by the public road, 'more infancium lustratbat', was run over by a cart loaded with dung.\(^{135}\) Whereas little Anna may have been left outside the house to play by her mother, little John Hargrave's accident was clearly due to his ability to move around the family cottage at the age of about fifteen months, when one night he fell into the hearth while left unattended;\(^ {136}\) the commentator blamed his parents' negligence in not being aware of John's *imbecillitas infantuli*. These two cases were recorded in the collection of miracles attributed to king Henry VI, who was held responsible for both children's recoveries. The age of walking is one statistic that has been used by some historians to indicate the rate of infant development through time, albeit with scant data for the medieval period. The table presented by deMause shows a long gap between the age of first walking at 28 months mentioned by the Roman author Macrobius in 400 AD and the age of 14 months of

\(^{133}\) Seymour (1975) vol. 1, book 6.5 'De puero', 300.

\(^{134}\) Quoted by Demaille (1977) 475 from Savonarola's book *De regimine pregnantium et noviter natorum usque ad septennium*, written in the vernacular and addressed to the women of Ferrara; the idea of an apple to tempt children probably dates back to Antiquity.


\(^{136}\) Finucane (1997) 130.
Federico d'Este in 1501. Again, there is simply too little evidence, if any, for the medieval period but in any case too much may be made of the age of walking as a sign of either positive development or retardation; Demaitre aptly quotes the *Regimen sanitatis*, based on Galen and attributed to Arnold of Villanova (c. 1230-1311), that an infant 'should not be forced to sit up or walk before the desire comes to him naturally' - a piece of advice that sounds remarkably sensible and modern.

The infant may have been ascribed a moist quality but excretion and toilet training are topics generally ignored by medieval authors and modern historians alike; the author of *Vices and Virtues* may have marvelled at the humble state of Christ as an infant but to connect the Christ child with soiled swaddling clothes would clearly have been unthinkable. Whereas medieval medical writings do mention infants' digestion, they generally remain silent on such hygienic aspects as the frequency of changing swaddling clothes or the best ways towards toilet training. The commode only started featuring more prominently in late-medieval art once artists began to concentrate more on scenes of everyday life and interiors with all their paraphernalia. Its blatant presence in the scene of *Gula* (Gluttony) in Hieronymus Bosch's tabletop of the Seven Deadly Sins (Madrid, Prado), where it has probably just been vacated by a very fat boy with bare legs, is clearly intended to add symbolic meaning. In view of the overall presentation of infant care and development, the boy in blue on f. 110bv of a northern French psalter of the early sixteenth century (Oxford, Bodleian MS Douce 276) may also be represented as sitting on a commode but one cannot be certain.

Learning to walk and talk are essential steps in the life of a human being towards communication and enterprise, necessary to function as an adult, and these are the two main aspects of the age of *infantia* in medieval culture. For some medieval writers, children do not really begin their second phase in life until they learn to express themselves articulately, if not always rationally, and have full mobility; thus *infantia* ends when the child has started to change its milk-teeth and the next stage of *pueritia* sets in, when the child is still playful but now in training, either as an apprentice or at school. There is still much to learn in this second stage and the next before a human being reaches physical perfection; sadly, with knowledge and experience comes the loss of innocence, that prime virtue of

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137 deMause (1980) 50, table 2. In view of deMause's modern standard of 10-12 months, Federico at least did rather well compared to Anne of Denmark, who apparently did not walk until 60 months old, thus providing deMause with further evidence of presumed retardation amongst children in the past.

138 Demaitre (1977) 470, 475.

infanta. For this reason, John Mirk instructed priests to warn their parishioners not to let children sleep together ‘whenne þey passe seuen þere’ as they were then considered old enough to discover sex, ‘that fowle dede’.140 Childish innocence was both admired and mocked by medieval writers, as epitomized by the many exempla told by preachers of young monks and nuns innocent about the other sex.141 Notwithstanding the dogma of original sin, the general feeling was that the younger the child the more innocent it must be; the type of innocence that will eventually be lost through experience, unless a child grows up in an unnaturally shielded environment like the ‘fool’ Perceval protected by his mother not only from knighthood but also from his own sexuality. The natural infans is still blithely unaware of sin, which is why nudity is still its natural state in medieval art.

THE INFANS IN MEDIEVAL ART

According to the physiological interpretations of the Age of infantia, the infant and young child could be viewed positively as merry and innocent, but also more negatively as weak and immature. All these characteristics come together in the image of the playful naked infant with its unprotected and underdeveloped body. So strong was this image that the poet of the Middle-English romance Havelok the Dane of around 1285 introduced his royal hero thus: ‘Pe tale is of Hauelok imaked; / Wil he was litel, he yede ful naked’.142

Although the image of the naked infans already occurs much earlier in depictions of the Ages of Man, there is no denying that the motif of children at play became particularly popular from the later fourteenth century on. A major influence was probably the naked putto, dating back to Antiquity and rediscovered as an important theme in the Italian Renaissance although some examples from the medieval period can be found.143 However, the fat and winged Italian putto can scarcely be recognized in the images of naked children that one finds in northern art of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries; these rarely have wings and tend to look older and much more lanky although their nudity still characterizes them as infantes. Similar differences can be found between Italian and, for example, Netherlandish depictions of the Christ child, with the latter often looking remarkably emaciated and fragile with wizened faces when compared to their

140 Peacock (1902) II. 216-221.
141 See, for example, Coulton (1928) vol. 4, nos. 90 and 100.
142 French and Hale (1964) II. 5-6.
143 Raimond van Marle, Iconographie de l'art profane au moyen-âge et à la renaissance et la décoration des demeures, vol. 1: La vie quotidienne (The Hague, 1931) 187: Van Marle mentions a late romanesque example on the frame around a portal at Spoletto Cathedral, an early fourteenth-century painted ornamental frieze at the castle of Angera at the Lago Maggiore, and several putti at play in a late-gothic relief at the cathedral of Citta di Castello.
glowingly robust Italian counterparts. The typical Italian chubby putto with wings would eventually become a popular device in northern art, especially on tomb monuments, but in the late-medieval period it is the *infans* rather than the putto proper that one finds playing in characteristically *infans* fashion.

The image of little, often naked, children at play appears to have become a popular motif in French art in the course of the fourteenth century, although no examples appear to survive from this period; an early example is a reference to king Charles V of France ordering the decoration for the queen's chamber at the Hôtel de Saint-Pol, which sources describe as consisting of little children eating fruit and picking flowers. Many descriptions of tapestries of this period mention 'esbatements d'enfans', such as the two owned by countess Margaret of Flanders, which Van Marle believed to refer simply to playing putti although he cautiously included the possibility that some might have represented children's games. Philippe le Hardi is listed in an inventory of 1401 as possessing a tapestry showing 'denouemens d'amans et d'enfans' while another in his collection contained 'dames sarrasines et enfans ceuillant florets'. Valentina Visconti, wife of Louis d'Orléans, is also known to have owned a tapestry with rosebushes and children - presumably more like the traditional putti in this case - displaying mottos, while the Duc de Berry apparently had tapestries showing a 'chambre aux enfans'.

Only later examples of such tapestries survive, which may still give us an indication of what these earlier motifs looked like, an example being the tapestry shown in the exhibition *L'enfance au Moyen Age* dating from the early sixteenth century. It shows naked children frolicking in a flower-strewn field amidst rabbits, peacocks and other birds; some children wear necklaces, some pick flowers, one child carries a small windmill, one rides a hobbyhorse while another plays a flute and a small drum simultaneously. The children in this tapestry have long hair and look older with more developed bodies, quite unlike the usual Italian putto with its baby fat and puffed cheeks. A German tapestry representing the month of July, dated c. 1400-25 and probably once part of a set illustrating the Labours of the Month (Burrell Collection, Glasgow), also includes two semi-naked blonde *infantes* with their own childish attributes of the windmill and (very basic types of) hobby-horse.

145 Van Marle (1931) vol. 1, 189.
146 Van Marle (1931) vol. 1, 189.
147 Van Marle (1931) vol. 1, 189.
148 The tapestry is in the collection of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris.
2. THE NATURE OF INFANCY

The motif of children playing in the nude also achieved a great popularity in manuscript illumination of the fifteenth century: a French manuscript of the *Danse macabre* (BN ms. fr. 995, f. 7) features a naked chubby child with a lance on a hobbyhorse in its bottom margin, and several naked children are depicted in the bottom margins of the Hours of Mary of Burgundy.\(^{149}\) Mention should also be made here of a northern-French book of hours of c. 1500 (Oxford, Bodleian MS. Douce 276), which positively teems with young children - both naked and clothed - playing and swimming. These northern images of children may look older than the Italian putto but their emphasis is virtually always on innocent child's play. The motif of naked small children frolicking about also clearly had a great appeal to the late fifteenth-century Hausbuch Master and his followers, although by this time the theme was already well established.\(^{150}\) In some places even Christ and St John the Baptist did not escape the same treatment; notwithstanding its religious symbolism, the scene of the two naked holy infants playing at catching birds together below a Visitation scene in the Hours of Catherine of Cleves, f. 23, is clearly based on the same popular appeal, albeit that the nimbed Christ with his orb is the less playful of the two.\(^{151}\) Another manuscript produced in Mainz, the missal of the countess palatine Margaretha von Simmern of 1481-82 (Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett MS 78 b.4, f. 14), shows the naked infant Christ prancing between the birds and foliage in the margin.\(^{152}\) The Christ child is thus integrated into the theme of *infantes* at play, albeit with allegorical overtones. As we shall see in the next chapter, the naked Christ child emerged in the fourteenth century as a devotional image in its own right, at a time when writers and artists expanded the story of Christ's Nativity with apocryphal events and details of his early childhood. Stories appeared of the bread of the Eucharist being transformed into a living infant in order to prove that the host really was the body of Christ.\(^{153}\) It has even been claimed that up to the late fifteenth century the *Infantia Christi* - presented as a small Christ child dressed in a shift and being led by his mother's hand - was a devotional image in its own right.\(^{154}\) This all suggests - perhaps more clearly than the changing appearance of

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\(^{150}\) See the exhibition catalogue 's *Levens Felheid: De Meester van het Amsterdamse Kabinet of de Hausbuch-meester*, exhibition catalogue Rijksmuseum (Amsterdam, 1985) cat. 59-61.


\(^{152}\) See 's *Levens Felheid*, cat. 120.


\(^{154}\) This theme was studied by Hans Wentzel in a number of articles, among which 'Ad Infantiam Christi: Zu der Kindheit unseres Herren', in *Das Werk des Künstlers: Studien zur Ikonographie und Formgeschichte, Hubert Schrade zum 60. Geburtstag dargebracht von Kollegen und Schülern* (Stuttgart, 1960) 134-60, and 'Das Jesukind an der Hand Mariae auf dem Siegel des Burkard von
the gothic Virgin and Child - an increased interest in the Age of infantia and its characteristic innocence.

THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

In the poem Of he seuen Ages (BL MS Add. 37.049, f. 28v) the 'Fende' recognizes that the innocent infant is not yet his to claim but he is willing to bide his time: 'When þyou art a lytell more & more, / þan sal þou lerne on my lore' (ll. 5-6). It is, indeed, only a matter of time for the child is bound to succumb to sin eventually, if he manages to survive: 'Jonge saynt alde devell is ane alde sawe' (l. 9), as the devil comments on the second Age of pueritia.

According to Matthew 18:2-4, Christ's own words reflect a very positive image of infantia:

2 And Jesus calling unto him a little child [parvulum], set him in the midst of them, 3 And said: Amen I say to you, unless you be converted, and become as little children [sicut parvul]i, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. 4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child [sicut parvulus], he is greater in the kingdom of heaven.

This led early authors such as St Jerome to present a similarly worthy account of the 'parvulus' who does not continue to bear a grudge or remember an injury, does not delight in the sight of an attractive female, and is incapable of hypocrisy - all adult characteristics that the infans has not yet acquired. If the infans was, indeed, considered to be in essence an innocent human being without the mental and physical abilities to sin, it does not seem quite so surprising that it became customary in Christian art to depict the soul as a miniature human being or even an infant. This ἐνδοξόν originated in Antiquity when Greek, Etruscan and Roman artists used the figure of a small human being, naked and often also winged, to depict the soul of a deceased person. In Christian art the eidolon lost its wings but remained naked and usually showed no indication of gender; it eventually developed more clearly into an infant, usually naked but sometimes swaddled like a real baby. The two types can be observed in two representations of the Dormition of the Virgin: the Virgin's soul held by Christ on f. 29 of the Winchester Psalter (BL MS Nero C IV), c. 1150-60, is swaddled, whereas Christ in the Death of the Virgin window in the south aisle at Chartres Cathedral of c. 1200-15 is holding a


155 See Bowers (1952).
156 See Burrow (1988) 106; Jerome's words were recalled by Isidore, Bede and Ælfric.
clearly naked and rather feminine figure with longer hair, albeit a relatively undeveloped and sexless body and not necessarily that of a child. The iconographical representation of the soul as a miniature figure, often resembling a naked infant, can also be found on some medieval tomb monuments, such as the miniature memorial of Canon Aymeric who was buried in Toulouse Cathedral in 1282. In the context of the Last Judgement, however, the soul usually appears in adult guise again, as we shall see; Man's sins and virtues weighed by the Archangel Michael in depictions of the Last Judgement may again resemble miniature adults, most notably in Rogier van der Weyden's Last Judgement retable at Beaune. As discussed earlier, some later medieval scenes of the Incarnation show Christ's soul as a diminutive infant descending on the Virgin in a reversal of the more ancient tradition of the soul leaving the dying body; here the soul is unmistakably a diminutive baby rather than a miniature adult-like figure. At death, the soul would leave the body through the mouth as depicted in the death of Dives on the romanesque Lincoln frieze. A very interesting juxtaposition can be observed in some late-medieval German blockbook depictions of the birth by caesarean of the Antichrist; the latter is extracted as a naked infant from his dying mother's body while her soul leaves the body through her mouth. As befits such an ominous birth, devils assist in both 'deliveries'; the actual baby is larger than the departing soul but otherwise they look equally infant-like.

Even though Aristotle had believed the newborn's mind to be a tabula rasa, and others affirmed innocence as the infant's natural state, not everyone held such a positive view. As far as St Augustine was concerned, every child is born tainted with original sin and needs to be cleansed of sin through baptism; therefore, a child that dies unbaptized is a lost soul, forever damned, and this view was to have long-term consequences. In his Confessiones Augustine asked the vital question: 'If "I was conceived in iniquity and in sins my mother nourished me

159 Philippe Ariès, Images de l'homme devant la mort (1983), translated as Images of Man and Death (Cambridge/London, 1985) 37, 40 and plate 63. Another such representation of the soul features on the brass of Walter, son of William Beauchamp, c. 1430, at Checkendon in Oxfordshire; I am grateful to Professor Nigel Saul for drawing my attention to this brass.
160 See Romanesque: Stone Sculpture from Medieval England (Leeds, 1993) cat. 37; cf. cat. 19 for a similar iconography in the slightly later lunette depicting the death of a sinner from York Minster, c. 1170-80(?).
161 See Blockbücher des Mittelalters: Bilderfolgen als Lektüre, exhibition catalogue Gutenberg-Museum (Mainz, 1991) cat. 2-3; another fifteenth-century blockbook on the Antichrist in cat. 1 shows just the birth without the soul leaving the mother's body. See also Blumenfeld-Kosinski (1991) 125ff and esp. pls 23-24.
162 Demaitre (1977) 481, based on Aristotle's De anima.
163 Shahar (1992) 45 and notes; see also G G Coulton, Infant Perdition in the Middle Ages, Medieval Studies 16 (Taunton, 1922).
servant was innocent?'. 164 Clearly doubting an infant's supposed innocence even after baptism, he regarded this age cynically rather than sentimentally, especially its tantrums, and concluded: 'So the feebleness of infant limbs is innocent, not the infant's mind'. 165

Baptism was, therefore, crucial to safeguard the soul of a newborn child and this was stressed not just in omnipresent depictions of this sacrament but also in medieval texts such as the religious lyric 'The Sweetness of Jesus' in Lambeth MS 853, which reminds us that Christ 'with baptym waischi\(\ge\)at kynde / Pat foulide was \(\ge\)oru\(3\) adams dede'. 166 Adam and Eve were able to live in innocent nudity until their Fall taught them shame, just as the young infans is often depicted in a symbolically naked state; it is probably for this reason that a fully dressed Eve after the Expulsion is contrasted with her young naked sons Cain and Abel in a German illuminated manuscript version of the *Speculum humanae salvationis* of c. 1325-30 (Benediktinerstift Kremsmünster, Codex Cremifanensis 243, f. 8). 167

Notwithstanding the usual medical warnings against bathing the newborn infant in cold water, in medieval England baptism was usually performed by the infant's total immersion into the font, except in an emergency when aspersion was an acceptable alternative. 168 Convention may have been equally strong in medieval depictions of this sacrament as in childbirth scenes in art, which often show the child being immersed face-forward - surely a more hazardous practice than lowering the child into the font with its face upward. The infant also received the chrism with oil that was to be changed once a year, according to Mirk; 169 with reference to this, and to the white 'chrysom-cloth' with which they were covered after baptism, infants were sometimes described as 'chrysom-children' or 'chrysomers' both in literature and occasionally on tomb monuments. 170 In the course of the Middle Ages, baptism tended to take place ever sooner after birth until it became customary within a fortnight or even week from the child's birth, although the church recognized situations in which an earlier baptism was necessary, as we shall see; godparents also had to be found who would be

166 Furnivall (1895) 9, ll. 27-28.
167 Willibrord Neumüller (ed.), *Speculum humanae salvationis* (German facsimile edition of Codex Cremifanensis 243, Benediktinerstift Kremsmünster) Glanzlichter der Buchkunst 7 (Graz, 1997).
168 Ann Eljenholm Nichols, *Seeable Signs: The Iconography of the Seven Sacraments 1350-1544*, (Woodbridge, 1994) 200, esp. n. 28, explains that while baptism by aspersion became more common on the Continent from the twelfth century on, in England immersion remained the norm.
169 Peacock (1902) 20, ll. 633ff.
170 See Oosterwijk on chrysom effigies, in preparation.
responsible for the child's religious upbringing.  

More elaborate ceremonies were held for royal and noble offspring although here, too, concern for the infant's health could give speed precedence over pomp; after his first two sons by Isabella of Portugal had died as infants, duke Philip the Good of Burgundy chose to have his third son and heir (the future Charles the Bold) baptized on the same day that he was born, 11 November 1433.

Baptism was obviously a vital ceremony and there were many superstitions surrounding it; not only was the unbaptised infant at risk from the devil but even from fairies, who might snatch a healthy baby and replace it with a sick or retarded changeling.  

Although his particular superstition is best known from the post-medieval period, there is the well-documented medieval story of the holy greyhound Guinefort; this superstitious cult in the diocese of Lyons and its subsequent suppression were recounted in an exemplum by the Dominican friar Étienne de Bourbon, who died at Lyons in 1261.  

The belief that the souls of children who died unbaptized were lost forever, resulted in their official exclusion from Christian burial in hallowed ground, which cannot but have added to parents' grief at the death of children. Archaeological evidence of infant burial within and outside cemeteries is hard to find as well as open to different interpretations but the Church does seem to have tried to enforce such exclusion of unbaptized infants.  

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171 See Mirk's instructions in Peacock (1902) 151ff. The editor's gloss 'Children to be christened at Easter and Whitsantide only, except of necessity' is clearly a misreading of II. 141-48, in which Mirk stipulates that children born before Easter and Whitsantide should be baptized after eight days 'Saue tho that mowe not a-byde / For peryle of deth to that tyde'.

172 See Sommé in Cauchies (1998) 38. Of the first two sons, Antoine (born 30 December 1430, died 5 February 1432) was baptized nineteen days after he was born and Josse (born 24 April 1432, died 21 August 1432) twelve days after his birth.

173 See Keith Thomas, Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England (1971, repr. Harmondsworth, 1984), esp. p. 731: 'The early weeks of infancy were particularly crucial here, for the fairies were thought most likely to act before the child had been baptized or the mother churched'. A medieval drawing apparently illustrating a devil exchanging an infant for a changeling is illustrated in Demaitre (1977) pl. 4, albeit without discussion or source. Jacques de Vitry also mentioned the French chamium or changeling in his Exempla of the first half of the thirteenth century; see Coulton (1928) vol. 2, 38.


175 Christopher Daniell, Death and Burial in Medieval England 1066-1550 (London/New York, 1997, repr. 1998) 127, cites the example of a royal licence given in 1398 to enclose the cemetery.
pregnant women who died before or during childbirth, as specified around 1400 by John Mirk in his instruction on 'Qui Sunt Sepeliendi in Cimiterio': 'A womman þat dyeth in chyldyng schal not ben byred in chirch, but in chirch-3arde, so þat þe schylde furste be takon oute of hure and byried outeyyth chyrch-3orde'.

On the other hand, the Church clearly recognized the importance of saving infants' souls to the extent of actually instructing midwives on how to baptize even the unborn child in extremis - an amazing infringement for women on one of the most vital duties of male priesthood. By the fourteenth century several English authors took care to stipulate the conditions by which such lay baptism would be valid; for example, a lengthy instruction for midwives on what to do in such circumstances is included in a long poem for parish priests written by John Mirk. His Instructions for Parish Priests informs us that a midwife could baptize when 'þe chylde bote half be bore / Hed and necke and no more' (ll. 91-92) and also orders her to rip up the mother's body with a knife in order to baptize the child inside, if necessary, 'for that ys a dede of charyte' (l. 102). In such dire emergency she may even break the taboo on male presence at childbirth and 'calle a mon / That in that nede helpe hyre con' (ll. 105-6). Parents themselves may also baptize their newborn if nobody else is near, and Mirk gives the correct formula both in English and Latin, stressing only the importance of the correct order of the words: 'Englysch or latyn, whether me seyþ, / Hyt suffyseth to the feyth, / So that þe wordes be seyde on rowe' (ll. 131-33). The only other conditions are that the water and vessel used in such lay baptisms should be disposed of properly, and that the child should not be baptized twice. For this same reason, foundlings were to be conditionally baptized.

Obviously, notwithstanding this permitted emergency procedure, many infants would have died before they could receive baptism and it must have been a universal unease at the thought of these otherwise guiltless souls' eternal damnation that, by the twelfth century, had inspired the idea of a limbo puerorum. This Limbo was a special area outside Hell and Purgatory for the souls of unbaptized children which, together with the Limbo of the Patriarchs for those righteous souls who predated Christ, offered a less harsh alternative for these two groups which

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177 See Pantin (1955) esp. chapter 9 on manuals of instruction for parish priests.
178 Peacock (1902); the guidelines on midwives' duties and emergency baptism can be found in the section 'Quid & quomodo predicare debet parochianos suos', esp. ll. 87-148.
179 Peacock (1902) ll. 617ff.
many felt should not be damned forever. Of course, the latter Limbo had been emptied through Christ's descent into Hell but the limbo puerorum would continue to serve as the place for humans tainted only by original instead of personal sin. Its character continued to be a matter for debate amongst theologians; Hugh of Strasbourg in his Compendium theologiae veritatis of c. 1268 placed it above Hell but underneath Purgatory, describing it as a place 'where one endures the punishment of damnation but not the punishment of the senses, and there is both inner and outer darkness'. In his Divina Commedia, Dante included his beloved sages of the ancient world in the Limbo of the Patriarchs but also twice referred with some feeling to the limbo puerorum with its 'souls of babes whom death / bit off in their first innocence before / baptism washed them of their taint of earth'.

However, the idea of the limbo puerorum is a somewhat curious departure from the traditional dogma that all souls would assume the ideal age of Christ. Although medieval theological thought on the Resurrection is too complicated and extensive to discuss here at length, there were basically two resurrections in Christian thinking, both of the soul and of the body. It was thought that the soul would arise first whereas the body will be resurrected at the Last Judgement, but there were different ideas as to the age that the resurrected would enjoy. On the one hand, there were the words in Isaiah 65:20: 'There shall no more be an infant of days there, nor an old man that shall not fill up his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old, and the sinner being a hundred years old shall be accursed'. This was interpreted by Jerome and others as the definitive age for all after the Resurrection. On the other hand, there was the tradition that the blessed would instead assume the perfect age of Christ, i.e. between thirty and thirty-three, depending on which author one consults. This idea was based on St Paul's

183 Christian views on the Resurrection have been studied by Caroline Walker Bynum, The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336 (New York, 1995); for the two resurrections, see esp. 167-68. See also her essay 'Material Continuity, Personal Survival and the Resurrection of the Body: A Scholastic Discussion in its Medieval and Modern Contexts' in Bynum (1992) 239-79.
184 See Burrow (1988) 103-4.
185 For example, the author of the Middle-English Cursor Mundi adopted the age of thirty as did Vincent of Beauvais in his Speculum Historiale, whereas the author of The Pricke of Conscience proposed a more exact age of thirty-two years and three months; see Meg Twycross, "'With what body shall they come?' Black and White Souls in the English Mystery Plays', in: Helen Phillips (ed.), Langland, the Mystics and the Medieval English Religious Tradition: Essays in Honour of S.S. Hussey (Cambridge, 1990) 274-75. In contrast, the author of the Middle-English dialogue Vices and Virtues of c. 1200 stated that Christ 'was her on bese liue wuniȝende þrie and þriht wintre and an half mang senfulle mannen'; see Holthausen (1888) 51.
2. THE NATURE OF INFANCY

epistle to the Ephesians 4:13: 'Donec orruamus omnes in unitatem fidei, et agnitionis Filii Dei, in virum perfectum, in mensuram aetatis plenitudinis Christi'.\(^{186}\) In the fourth century the Syrian writer Ephraim was certain that all mankind will rise as adults, even the mere foetus in its mother's womb:

One who dies in the womb of his mother and never comes to life, will be quickened at the moment [of resurrection] by [Christ] who quickens the dead; he will then be brought forth as an adult. If a woman dies while pregnant, and the child in her womb dies with her, that child will at the resurrection grow up and know its mother, and she will know her child.\(^{187}\)

Other writers also expressed their belief in this same perfect age for all; according to St Augustine, however, there would still be hierarchical and gender distinctions in Heaven, and Peter Lombard believed that the resurrected bodies would return to their original youthful stature.\(^{188}\) Thus, infants and children would also share this fate along with adults and be raised not as children but 'in virum perfectum'; as we shall see in chapter 4, Ælfric in the late tenth century still firmly believed that the Holy Innocents would attain their adulthood in Heaven. The Dreamer's daughter in the Middle-English poem *Pearl* died an infant yet she appears to him not as the child she was but as an elegantly dressed maiden, one of the brides of Christ in Heaven, as illustrated in the manuscript of c. 1400 (BL Cotton MS Nero A. X, f. 42);\(^{189}\) her heavenly wisdom allows her to teach the Dreamer, thus reversing their roles of infant and adult. Strictly speaking, however, this dream shows the blessed state that the little girl's soul has attained, not her bodily resurrection. It is worth remembering that the perfect age at the Resurrection resembles the ideal Age in depictions of the Ages of Man where the epitome of human development is shown as an elegant figure of man at his most perfect, often holding a falcon; this figure in hunting mode also represents the month of May, the favourite season in medieval culture when the upper classes are presented hunting and wooing, as shown in illuminated books of hours like the Duke of Berry's *Très Riches Heures*. This presentation of the perfect age in Heaven may explain the iconography of such

\(^{186}\) Transl.: Until we all meet into the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age and of the fulness of Christ. Medieval theological thought on this subject also based itself on 1 Corinthians 15, especially verses 51-53. See Twycross in Phillips (1990) 274ff.

\(^{187}\) Quoted from Ephraim's *Sermones* by Bynum (1995) 77. Apart from this, however, Bynum rather skirts the aspect of children and the perfect age nor does Binski (1996) discuss the fate of children in chapter 4 'Death and the afterlife'.

\(^{188}\) Bynum (1995) 98ff and 122, n. 15, quotes both St Augustine and Peter Lombard on age and gender; the word *vir* in Ephesians 4:13 was not to be taken literally.

\(^{189}\) The age of the dead little girl is indicated in l. 483: 'Thou lyfed not two yer in oure thede [land]'. See Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron (eds.), *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript: Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, York Medieval Texts, second series (London, 1978).
tombs as those of St Louis' infant children Jean and Blance at Royaumont, which were discussed in chapter 1. 190

It is an odd contradiction that whereas on the one hand the soul was often depicted as a small child in medieval art, on the other there was the belief that all mankind would rise as adults at the Resurrection. In view of this latter dogma, one would not expect to find children amongst the resurrected in depictions of the Last Judgement in medieval art yet it has been suggested that they do occur on the lintel of Gislebertus' tympanum at Autun of c. 1125-35; it is indeed touching to interpret thus the three relatively smaller figures surrounding the angel above the left-hand doorway yet theologically it would seem a rather daring aberration. 191 The three figures at Autun appear smaller still by their lower position on the lowest rim of the lintel but especially the figure on the angel's left has a relatively large head more befitting a child; however, it is extremely hazardous to interpret the proportions or appearance of romanesque figures in this way, and the excited behaviour of these smaller humans is in any case matched by that of some of the adults. The small figure carried by an angel in the central tympanum of the west portal of St Étienne cathedral in Bourges, c. 1240, is almost certainly a soul rather than a child. 192

Nevertheless, there is the Last Judgement miniature from the Trinity College Apocalypse (MS R.16.2, f. 25), which also contains two smaller figures both amongst the resurrected in both Heaven and in the Mouth of Hell; these were unquestioningly identified as children by Caroline Walker Bynum. 193 Bynum detected an increasing focus in depictions of the Resurrection on the individual by the thirteenth century: 'the dead who rise whole from either coffin or earth are increasingly particularized by haircolor, sex, age, and (when clothed) by raiment that expresses details of worldly rank and power'. 194 Her claim would agree with

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190 Of course, the Ages of Man apply to men, not women; although the age of thirty to thirty-three may have seemed perfect for men, the perfect woman was probably the nubile young maiden, much like the Virgin Mary herself at the time of the Annunciation.

191 See Denis Grivot and George Zamecki, Gislebertus, Sculptor of Autun (London, 1961) plate A and 26: 'Two charming groups are particularly worthy of attention: an angel surrounded by three children, who cling to it as if to beg for protection [pl. A]; and nearby a man and a woman, who are clearly husband and wife: he clasps her hand while she points to their child still freeing itself from its shroud'. This latter interpretation is reminiscent of Ephraim's view that children will still know their parents in heaven, although they themselves will also become adults.


193 Bynum (1995) pl. 28: 'In this magnificent miniature probably from the second quarter of the thirteenth century, demons fling the damned into the mouth of hell, while just above this, the saved, clearly differentiated anatomically into men, women, and children, contemplate a Christ in majesty at the very moment of their escape from the watery deep and the mouth of Leviathan'. No other such supposed age distinctions are observed for either the First Resurrection or the Last Judgement in other Apocalypse manuscripts in Suzanne Lewis, Reading Images: Narrative Discourse and Reception in the Thirteenth-Century Illuminated Apocalypse (Cambridge, 1995) esp. 184-90

the emergence of the *limbo puerorum*, another sign of an increased interest in the identity and ultimate fate of the individual. However, one wonders whether the occasional smaller figure looking like a 'miniature adult' might not instead indicate the differences in stature indicated by Peter Lombard as most medieval depictions of the Last Judgement continued to distinguish the resurrected through sex and social rank, *not* age; infants as such are not yet shown, at least not until the end of the Middle Ages, as we shall see later.

**Conclusion**

Whatever the ambiguities surrounding it, there is no denying that the concept of childhood is an ancient one and that infancy proper was recognized as a separate stage with its own distinct characteristics. Rather than regarding the infant as the swaddled and barely responsive bundle that could not inspire affection and rarely received sufficient attention to its needs, as some historians have proposed, in medieval culture at any rate the infant was seen as a helpless and innocent being with its own characteristics that demanded proper care in order to survive. There is a curious symmetry in the Ages of Man and its representations of the *infans* versus *decrepitus* or the end of Man's existence; the swaddled infant tied to its cradle and the toddler taking its tentative steps armed with a whirligig are in a way mirror images of the old man walking shakily with his stick and the shrouded corpse in his coffin or tomb. Thus, Man ends as helplessly as he started in life,195 much as Shakespeare's Jacques described the last of his seven Ages:

> Last scene of all,  
> That ends this strange eventful history,  
> Is second childishness and mere oblivion,  
> Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.196

He might have added: 'sans innocence'.

Yet for all these distinct differences between the Ages, in Christian thought every human being was bound at the Resurrection to assume the ideal age of Christ, the age of physical perfection, the age that matches the perfect month of May and the one that can usually be seen at the summit in depictions of the Wheel of Life. Despite its innocence, so soon to be lost, *infantia* was no more an ideal age than that of the *senectus* or *decrepitus*. The soul in medieval art might appear like a small infant but at the Last Judgement it would rejoin a physically perfect body with

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195 Compare Nicholas (1985) 110, who found that a senile citizen in fourteenth-century Ghent was 'declared to have been incompetent to manage his property in the years before his death because "he was so aged that he was a child and had no control over his five senses"'.

196 *As You Like It*, II, vii, 163-66.
2. THE NATURE OF INFANCY

a mental maturity to match. Older people long past this perfect age on earth could look forward to regaining their youth again in Heaven, just as Christ's mother was crowned as a young virgin by her adult son in depictions of the Coronation. Even infants and children who failed to reach this ideal age in life, may have been expected to attain it eventually, at least if properly baptized. Thus, according to official Christian theology and as illustrated by *Pearl, infantia* is an earthly state; there would not be anything like it in Heaven.
Chapter 3. 'CHRYSONS', CRADLES AND BABY-WALKERS:
'Than buskis child to spek ore ga'

La présence ou l'absence du berceau ont, depuis le Moyen Age, été l'occasion d'interprétations pour le moins abusives sur la qualité du sentiment de l'enfance.¹

In its barest essence, the medieval infant was naked. Referring to his newborn state, Humanum Genus or Mankind introduces himself thus in the Middle-English morality play The Castle of Perseverance, which may have been composed between 1400 and 1425: 'pis nyth I was of my modir born [...] I am nakyd of lym and lende' (ll. 276, 279).² This is also how one often finds the Christ child presented in Nativity scenes, especially once St Bridget's vision had influenced the iconography, not just as a sign of his humility, humanity and helplessness but also of innocence. Around 1400 John Mirk wrote in a homily about the Holy Innocents:³

This Innocentes ðat holy chyrche syngeth of, lyueden her wythout schame; for ðay wer all within two zer of age. Wherfor ðay wer not aschamet of hor owne schapp; for when a chyld ys wythyn state of innocentes, he ys not aschamet of hys schappe, for he ys not defowled wyth fulth of synne, but of þe synne ðat he hathe, he draweth of þe synne of Adam and of Eve. For so ferden þey yn þe same wyse. For whyle þay wer yn paradyse yn þe state of þnnocentes, þay wer naket; but þay wer not aschamet of hor schappe, for þay wer wythout synne. But as sone as þay haden synned, þay seen hor schappe, and wern aschamet þerof, and hydden hit wyth leues of figge-tre. Thus, when synne bygynneth to take rote yn a chyld, þen þnnocentes gothe away; for þen he begynneth to know þe good from þe euell. þen he synneth, and þen he greueth hys God. But þes chyldyr lyued not soo long forto knew þe good from þe euell, but wern þislayne wythyn degre of þnnocentes. Wherfor þay lyuedon here wythout schame.

Nudity, then, is the natural state that only innocent children can enjoy without shame and thus, as we have seen, in itself an attribute of infantia up to the age of seven; this is further illustrated by the emergence in the fourteenth century of the naked playful infans as a popular motif in medieval art.

However, infants were also characterized in medieval culture by other means. Of the two most typical attributes of the young infant in medieval culture, one now tends to provoke strong reactions: on the one hand, there is the seemingly familiar

¹ Riché and Alexandre-Bidon (1994) 210, II.2, n. 2.
³ Erbe (1905) 35, no. 9, 'De Innocentibus et Eorum Festiuitate', ll. 11-28.
3. 'CHRYSOM’S, CRADLES AND BABY-WALKERS

The 'CHRYSOM'

Swaddling characterized the medieval infant; easily recognizable as an icon in even the most disproportionate human-faced cocoon, it must have been a boon to less talented artists. When the sheep-stealing Mak and his equally devious wife try to fool the shepherds in the Towneley Second Shepherds' Play, their plan to disguise the stolen sheep is to swaddle it and put it into a cradle as their own newborn child; the animal's long snout finally gives the game away, but only when one of the shepherds returns to give sixpence and a kiss as a gift to the 'baby'. Swaddling was the condition that every human child was due to experience once it managed to survive birth. In the dialogue Vices and Virtues of c. 1200, Christ is extolled as the omnipotent creator who yet 'makede him swa litel swo is ðat child of one niht ielde'; as such, 'he lai bewunden on fiteres [rags] and mid swabelbonde ibunden'. Similarly, the angel in the fifteenth-century copy of the Middle-German Nativity play or Weihnachtsspiel from St Gallen describes to the shepherds how Christ 'ist in ain tüch gewonden' and they in turn report to Herod how they found the Christ child: 'wir funden eB gewonden / In wmdlen vnd gebunden'.

Although some form of swaddling is still practised even nowadays in parts of eastern Europe, in England it was falling out of favour by the late eighteenth century, at least amongst the upper and middle classes of society, until it became an alien and somewhat dubious custom. However, for centuries the image of the

4 See Oosterwijk on chrysom effigies, in preparation.
5 Martin Stevens and A C Cawley (eds), The Towneley Plays, vol. 1, EETS, s.s. 13 (Oxford, 1994).
7 Emilia Batschmann (ed.), Das St. Galler Weihnachtsspiel, Altdeutsche Übungstexte, vol. 21 (Berne, 1977) II. 450 and 740-41. Transl.: [he] is wound in a cloth; we found it wound and tied in swaddling clothes.
8 For example, in 1861 Herbert Haines in A Manual of Monumental Brasses, (1861, repr. Bath, 1970), cxix, felt obliged to explain 'the old plan of dressing infants in swath-bondes, or swaddling clothes, which were long swathes of linen or other materials, wrapped round the under-clothes, and giving the child the appearance of an Egyptian mummy', adding as a footnote: 'The same practice of swathing infants is retained in Holland, Germany, Prussia, and other parts of Europe, as well as among the North American Indians'.
swaddled cocoon, apparently tightly bound with only a little face showing, had
been the convenient and most common way of depicting an infant, for babies were
invariably swaddled, whatever their status or gender. Nowadays, however, this
same image often elicits strong feelings amongst viewers because it seems not just
to epitomize a possibly misguided yet fortunately abandoned form of childcare in
the past but even to suggest the possibility of malicious cruelty stemming from a
deep inner resentment or even filicidal impulses. Countries where some form of
swaddling is still being practised today may find themselves the target of
psychohistorical research, in which swaddling is presented as only part of a range
of punishments and cruelty rather sweepingly described as 'medieval practices' -
medieval clearly being the ultimate term to denote barbarity. 9 Although it seems
that a modified and short-term type of swaddling is currently being reintroduced in
some places as part of a new approach towards the handling of prematurely born
infants, images of swaddled infants tend to evoke feelings of curiosity, pity and
even revulsion in most modern viewers. What was once so common has since
become anathema - so much so that any discussion on the subject of swaddling is
likely to raise strong controversy. 10 For all these disputes on swaddling, however,
little is actually known about its practical aspects, leaving unanswered such
questions about standards of hygiene, methods of swaddling, materials used or the
age at which children were finally left unswaddled. 11 As one author commented
very astutely:

Historians may be tempted to regard the tightly bundled infant in numerous
pictorial and sculpted representations as the symbol of the repressive character of
pre-modern and especially medieval society. Upon closer inspection, however,

9 See, for example, Alenka PuHar, 'Childhood Origins of the War in Yugoslavia: 1. Infant
Gentle Revolution: Childhood Origins of Soviet and East European Democratic Movements',
Journal of Psychohistory 17:4 (1990) 341-52, esp. 343: 'Just as infants who have been swaddled
cry out for their bindings when they are unbound - so used to restraint have they become - so, too,
adults who have been physically and emotionally swaddled as children cry out for totalitarian
restraints in their political systems'. Recent television reports on Kosovar refugees also included
pictures of babies that appeared swaddled.

10 A discussion on swaddling as 'one of the most widespread and most detrimental childrearing
practices in history' was instigated by the psychohistorian Lloyd deMause in early 1998 on the
internet discussion list child-family-history, which led to some heated arguments without
ultimately resolving anything. Claims made by deMause in this context as to the period of
swaddling - up to the age of eighteen months - and evidence of swaddling going back to prehistoric
times were never substantiated. Although it does seem that the arms at least were left free after
the initial stage of swaddling a child completely up to its neck, one may still wonder how anyone
could have managed to swaddle the lower body and legs of a healthy and strong 18-month-old
child. Significant in the context of this thesis is deMause's supposed pictorial evidence for the
length of swaddling, as explained in an internet message of 4 March 1998: 'The first source is
pictures, of which I have over three hundred, which I have used to carefully measure the size of the
swaddled infant as compared with the size of the adults shown, and have some that appear to be a
year old or more'.

11 See Lipton et al. (1965) for modern experiments with swaddling.
that assumption appears based on a simplistic interpretation of incomplete evidence. For example, unrestrained infants are quite often represented in medieval illuminations although they are easily overlooked by the modern viewer [...] The iconography and description of swaddling [...] deserve to be examined in greater detail [...] ¹²

Regrettably, it is often on aspects of daily life that were once thought too familiar to describe in any detail that we are most in need of information; the following discussion is only a tentative attempt to obtain a little more insight into the reality behind the icon of the swaddled cocoon.

**The theories behind swaddling**

Swaddling is certainly a practice of great antiquity; the Greek physician Soranus wrote quite specifically about it in his treatise *Gynaecia*. ¹³ Different reasons were given for swaddling infants by Soranus and other authors, but these do not necessarily explain a practice that was already well established and due to remain so for many centuries more. Perhaps surprisingly, swaddling was not just seen as a way of protecting a baby from cold. Instead, Soranus regarded it very much as a way of modelling the infant body, firming it up and preventing malformations as well as correcting any part of the body twisted during birth; for him this need for the perfect body also included shaping the nose and the skull of newborn babies. ¹⁴

This is, in fact, very much in line with the medieval belief that young children's minds are equally pliant and should be shaped and moulded in the right direction, much like a young tree; ¹⁵ when a child is old enough one may start forming its mind, but with infants one should concentrate on moulding their bodies. As for the length of swaddling, Soranus described - rather than prescribed - how some remove the swaddling clothes around the fortieth day, but most people only around the sixtieth day, his own advice being that one should wait until there is no more fear that one of the parts of the child's body might yet become deformed, and then only gradually leaving parts of the body unswaddled. ¹⁶

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¹² Demaire (1977) 471.
¹³ See Temkin (1991) esp. book 2.9 and 2.19; also discussed in Étienne (1973) and (1976).
¹⁴ Temkin (1991) book 2.9, 84.
¹⁵ Jenny Swanson, 'Childhood and Childrearing in *ad status* Sermons by Later Thirteenth Century Friars', *Journal of Medieval History* 16 (1990) 317, discusses this belief in the work of the Franciscan scholar John of Wales and in the thinking of the much earlier St Anselm of Canterbury (d. 1109). There is, of course, Eadmer's famous story of how Anselm warned an abbot against disciplining young oblates too harshly as they might grow full of hatred and suspicion, much in the way of saplings which, without room to grow, will become misshapen; see Coulton (1928) vol. 4, no. 29, 101-3.
¹⁶ Temkin (1991) book 2.19, 115: 'one should first free one hand, after some days the other, then the feet'.

infant suffered from soreness, one should abandon the swaddling clothes and dress the child in a simple little shirt.\textsuperscript{17}

Medieval authors simply continued to recommend swaddling along the same lines. Bartholomaeus Anglicus, in Trevisa's translation, followed Soranus' views in his section 'De infantulo':

\begin{quote}
And for tendernes \textit{yn} lymes of \textit{yn} childe mai esiliche and sone bowe and bende and take diuers schappis, and \textit{yn}fefore children membres and lymes ben ibounden wi\textit{p} listis and o\textit{p}ire couenable bondes \textit{yat} \textit{hay} be nou\textit{t} croked nothir yuel ischape.\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

The theory of the humours, which also played a role in the theories of the Ages of Man, also applied, according to some authors: 'the newborn child was swaddled in order to prevent untimely desiccation and to support his weak, wax-like frame "until he becomes less liquid and more firm (\textit{donec coagularetur et solidetur})".\textsuperscript{19}

Swaddling may also have helped 'ease the newborn's traumatic transition from the womb', and to prevent it from scratching itself.\textsuperscript{20} But whatever the theories proclaimed by different authors, in practice few women would have read them, relying instead on tradition and common experience handed down for generations: swaddling was already too well established for mothers and midwives to wonder too much about the reasons behind what must have seemed to them the best form of care. This comes out clearly in the Virgin's Song of c. 1375 in BL MS Harley 7322, where the author has Mary apologizing to the Christ child for the lack of swaddling clothes:

\begin{quote}
Iesu, sweete, beo noth \textit{wroj},
\textit{D}ou ich nabbe clout ne clo\textit{p}
\textit{D}e on to folde ne to wrappe,
For ich nabbe clout ne lappe
Bote ley \textit{d}ou \textit{bi} fet to my pappe,
And wite \textit{pe} from \textit{pe} colde.\textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{17} Temkin (1991) book 2.19, 115.
\textsuperscript{18} Seymour (1975) vol. 1, 299.
\textsuperscript{19} Demaitre (1977) 472, based on Caelius Aurelianus' Latin version of Soranus' \textit{Gynaecia} and Aldobrandinus of Siena's \textit{Le régime du corps}.
\textsuperscript{20} Demaitre (1977) 471. The additional reason of semi-sadistic and sexual repression proposed by some psychohistorians - based on the idea of adult projection - has not found universal acceptance; for this, see Lloyd deMause, 'The Evolution of Childhood', in Lloyd deMause (1980) 37: 'As we have noted, restraints were thought necessary because the child was so full of dangerous adult projections that if it were left free it would scratch its eyes out, tear its ears off, break its legs, distort its bones, be terrified of its own limbs, and even crawl about on all fours like an animal'. In his contribution of 4 March 1998 on swaddling on the internet discussion list 'history-child-family', he added to this list of supposed motives for swaddling: '[...] to prevent them from becoming violent, and to stop them from touching their genitals - all, I suggested, massive projections of disowned sexual and aggressive feelings of their parents.'
Although this is an example from literature, rather than from everyday life, it
appears to echo a generally shared concern about the need for swaddling as a way
of making a newborn child comfortable and - in this case - warm. This is brought
out further by a devotion on the Continent to one of the more curious relics from
Christ's infancy, as we shall see below.

**The practical aspects of swaddling**

Medieval authors may have proposed theories in support of swaddling infants but
they were not usually very specific about the methods. Of course, these are likely
to have varied in time as well as per area and class of society, just like the materials
used; for example, whereas in Italian art one may find children covered with cloth
and then wrapped with bands all around their bodies rather like mummies, as in the
famous terracotta roundels by Andrea della Robbia on the loggia of the Ospedale
degli Innocenti in Florence, in northern art the swaddled child is instead often
characterized by criss-cross bands across its wrapped body. However, there are
always variations; drawings of the destroyed wall-painting of c. 1360 from St
Stephen's Chapel at Westminster include a Nativity scene in which the Christ child
is being wrapped round instead with a long broad band of cloth. Two illustrations
may serve to show two different ways of how swaddling may have been applied in
north-western Europe during the medieval period, one being based on an
interpretation of medieval images and the other on actual recent practice in the
Balkans. If one compares two so-called chrysom brasses from two different
periods in England, one sees the criss-cross bands making way for broader
swaddling bands bound all across the body, while in official portraits such as the
early seventeenth-century painting of the Cholmondeley sisters the infants have
moreover been encased in richly decorated, stiff outer covers. Clearly, even
though swaddling remained the norm for centuries, it was subject to changes in
style and method whereas there may also have been a difference for children in the
higher ranks of society between practical nursery swaddling and more elaborate
swaddling costume for special occasions - something one does not easily find in
medieval art when the slowly reappearing art of portraiture proper was not yet
aimed at infants.

The basic method in any case seems to have consisted of a cloth carefully
folded around the child's body and held in place with the help of swaddling bands
wound around or across the child's body. Soranus recommended soft woollen
bandages because linen would shrink from the infant's sweat, and insisted that

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these should be clean and without hems to avoid irritating the skin.\textsuperscript{23} The treatise \textit{Regimen sanitatis}, written in 1309 by the Montpellier physician and professor Bernard de Gordon, contained the following instruction for nurses:\textsuperscript{24}

She should wrap him in clean and dry bands, and extend the thighs, legs and arms on the sides. The swathe ought to be wide and without folds, and she should not tighten it too much or too little but moderately. Then she should extend the thighs and the legs, and if the infant is male she should put his penis and testes outside the thighs. Then she should put him in the cradle.

The important aspects are the straightening and positioning of the limbs, the protection of the male genitalia, and the moderate tightening of the bands: too loose would mean that the limbs might not remain straight while too tight would obviously be uncomfortable or even harmful to the child. An awareness of this was shown by Margery Kempe who in one of her meditations on serving as Christ's wetnurse promised him: 'Lord, I schal fare fayr with 30 W; I schal not byndyn 30 W soor. I pray 30 w beth not dyspleysyd with me'.\textsuperscript{25}

With swaddling clearly subject to variation and medieval authors largely reticent on the precise method of swaddling, one must exercise extreme caution when faced with claims made by some modern authors. The psychohistorian deMause claimed that 'swaddling was often so complicated it took up to two hours to dress an infant' but he based this argument on a work published in 1830;\textsuperscript{26} medieval imagery contradicts such a complicated and lengthy swaddling process, and it seems equally unlikely for any other period. Riché and Alexandre-Bidon made quite different assertions about swaddling; believing the supposedly more supple swaddling method used in France, England and Germany to be different from the 'mummifying' method in Italy, they claimed that especially in France 'défaire la bande ou la remettre ne prenait que quelques secondes'.\textsuperscript{27} It has to be pointed out, however, that the authors provided absolutely no hard evidence to back up their claim other than the observations of 'un observateur plus attentif des images médiévales' such as the view that swaddled infants in Italian art look more rigid than their French counterparts who 'peut être assis sur les genoux de sa mère ou sur une petite chaise d'enfant'.\textsuperscript{28}

Two hours or just a few seconds to swaddle an infant? An interpretation of (medieval) art as a literal depiction of reality can obviously be used to support wide-ranging views on swaddling.

\textsuperscript{23} Temkin (1991) book 2.9, 85.
\textsuperscript{24} Quoted by Demaitre (1977) 472.
\textsuperscript{25} Meech (1940) chapter 6, 19.
\textsuperscript{26} deMause (1980) 37.
\textsuperscript{27} Riché and Alexandre-Bidon (1994) 66.
\textsuperscript{28} Riché and Alexandre-Bidon (1994) 66.
Materials used for swaddling would undoubtedly have varied according to region and class; tantalising references to swaddling can sometimes be found in literature, such as Margery Kempe's meditations on how as Christ's nurse she would go begging for 'fayr whyte clothys & kercys for to swathyn in' the Christ child. In literary descriptions of swaddling, the time factor for such a routine and universal chore is usually taken for granted. One wonders, too, at the hygienic aspects of swaddling as regular changing and bathing would have been essential if sores and infections were to be avoided; it is not difficult to imagine the effect of leaving children to soak in their own excrement for any length of time. Again, regular hygiene would have been easier to achieve in upper-class households where there might be nurses in charge of the baby, than in peasant homes where mothers might be obliged to leave their infants unattended for longer periods while tending to other chores. It is doubtful whether many medieval infants received such treatment as the hero's newborn son in Marie de France's late twelfth-century lai of Milun whose carers are described as having rested, fed and bathed the baby seven times a day on his journey from South Wales to Northumbria. Babies were obviously bathed immediately after birth and the need for subsequent bathing was recognized, at least amongst the higher ranks of society, although it is hard to discover with what frequency such baths might have taken place. A medallion in one of the stained-glass windows of c. 1330 in the choir of the Frauenkirche at Esslingen (Schwabia) shows St Anne lowering her young daughter Mary into a bath-tub. One fourteenth-century French miracle play presents the story of a lady condemned to death for having drowned her baby in its bath, and the lost fourteenth-century altar-piece from Ingham (Norfolk) is said to have featured the miracle of St Nicholas saving an infant from being burnt to death in its boiling bath while its mother had gone to attend mass.

Another question equally difficult to answer is up to what age children remained swaddled as medical advice can be ambiguous. According to one of the miracles attributed to St Louis, little Jehannot was still being completely swaddled at the age of three and a half months when his mother found his right arm paralysed while removing his swaddling clothes; up to that time, he had been developing normally. The claim made by deMause's that 'swaddling was the central fact of

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29 Meech (1940) chapter 6, 19.
30 Rychner (1966) ll. 109-12
32 See Gaston Paris and Ulysse Robert (eds), Miracles de Nostre Dame, par personnages, 8 vols, Société des Anciens Textes Français (Paris, 1877) vol. 2, no. XV.
34 Paris, BN ms. fr. 5716, p. 373, miracle 48 for October 1282, as mentioned earlier in chapter 1.
the infant's earliest years' certainly seems wildly exaggerated. One may sometimes see evidence in art of the gradual removal of swaddling bands, as recommended by Soranus. Partly swaddled infants may appear, for example, in very late memorials for infants such as the incised tomb slab for Jean-Saladin d'Anglure of Givry at Nangis, who died on 3 October 1530; a drawing from the Gaignières Collection (Paris, BN MS Pe. 6, f. 32) shows his upper body quite elegantly dressed like that of a much older child and his arms left free, but from the waist down the effigy shows the telling criss-cross bands across the body and a characteristic fringe around the feet.\textsuperscript{35} The recorded epitaph is quite helpful in informing the reader that the child was three months old, which seems a likely age for such partial swaddling although perhaps less so for the flashy bonnet and doublet. Other effigies of part-swaddled infants survive in England and France although they are all much later than Jean-Saladin's slab, one English example being the brass of ten-week-old William King (d. 1633) at St George's Chapel, Windsor.\textsuperscript{36} An early example of fully swaddled 'chrysom' effigy in England is that on the eroded free-stone tomb slab of an unknown lady and child at Welby in Lincolnshire, which dates from the early fourteenth century; the small swaddled figure positioned along the left side of the slab still displays the characteristic criss-cross bands.

Depictions of partial swaddling from the waist down, leaving the arms free, are found relatively rarely in medieval art. Some authors have suggested that partial swaddling was not so much an intermediate stage before a child was left unswaddled, but rather subject to the season; an infant might thus be left partly unswaddled in summer to allow some air on its bare head, arms and upper body, while the legs remained swaddled to prevent the child from falling.\textsuperscript{37} This explanation of partial swaddling contradicts Soranus's advice and seems based rather on an over-literal interpretation of medieval art along the lines of modern thoughts on childcare. Again, one must be aware of the possibility of artistic licence; one illuminated Adoration scene from a fifteenth-century French book of hours in Cambridge (Fitzwilliam, MS 62) shows a partly swaddled Christ child

\textsuperscript{35} See F A Greenhill, Incised Effigial Slabs: A Study of Engraved Stone Memorials in Latin Christendom, c. 1100 to c. 1700 (London, 1976) vol. 2, plate 147b; cf. plate 147a. See also Jean Adhémar, 'Les tombeaux de la collection Gaignières: Dessins d'archéologie du xvii siècle', Gazette des Beaux-Arts 88 (1976) nos. 1532, 1766-1768. No. 1768 shows the triple tomb at Nogent-le-Roi of three children, one of whom is represented by a female effigy in full costume, the second by a fully swaddled 'chrysom' and the third by a partly swaddled infant with its hands in prayer.

\textsuperscript{36} See John Page-Phillips, Children on Brasses (London, 1970) fig. 60.

\textsuperscript{37} See Alexandre-Bidon and Closson (1985) 98: 'il ne s'agit de scènes estivales: par temps chaud, le maillot semble souvent abandonné et l'enfant en partie dénudé. C'est ainsi que le tout-petit aux champs, dans son bercou de bois au ras du sol, n'est plus vêtu que de bandelettes blanches et serrées qui lui laissent à l'air libre la poitrine, les épaules et la tête. [...] Si l'enfant n'est dénudé que partiellement, au soleil chaud de l'été, c'est qu'ainsi ligoté il chôit pas à terre et laisse la mère filer en paix.'
whose naked outstretched arms are probably due to the artistic need to show his acceptance of the proffered gifts, rather than to either his age or to seasonal conditions if one considers that Epiphany is celebrated on 6 January.

There is one curious contradiction that concerns the practical effect of swaddling on the infant itself. It has been suggested that swaddled children were almost ideal charges to look after because swaddling slows down a baby's heart beat and so results in the child crying less and sleeping more;\(^3^8\) in modern experiments, restraining of infants 'often produced a 'tranquil, "co-operative" state'.\(^3^9\) Sleep was considered essential for an infant's digestion and well-being, as Bartholomaeus Anglicus explained:

\begin{quote}
Item for children taken moche foode þaym nedþ moche sleep to clepen kynde hete to þe inner parties to make good digestioun of here mete and drinke. And þefore by exciting of kynde norischis vsen to rocke child[r]en in cradeles to conforte kynde hete wiþ esi and temperat meuynge, and to bringe þe childe softe and likyngliche aslepe by resolucioun of fumosites in his brayne.\(^4^0\)
\end{quote}

If swaddling made infants more tranquil and inclined to sleep, then why did they require the soothing comfort of a rocking cradle to send them to sleep at all? Some authors actually claim that swaddling left babies so uncomfortable and apt to cry that rocking cradles were essential soothing devices to make them sleep.\(^4^1\) Whatever the truth of the matter - and it may be that, although swaddling in itself might induce sleep, the discomfort of soiled swaddling clothes had the opposite effect - rocking cradles appear to have been extremely popular when swaddling was the norm.

**The swaddled Christ child**

Before we move on to the subject of the cradle, there is one aspect that deserves further mention, *i.e.* the swaddling of the Christ child. The above-mentioned French illumination of the partly swaddled Christ child in the Adoration of the Magi may show that it is dangerous to study the Christ child too literally for evidence about medieval swaddling practices yet this is still the most frequently depicted infant. As we have seen in chapter 1, the illuminated page with scenes of Christ's


\(^{39}\) Lipton *et al.* (1965) 521.

\(^{40}\) Seymour (1975) book 6.4, 299.

\(^{41}\) See, for example, Sally Kevill-Davies, *Yesterday's Children: The Antiques and History of Childcare* (1991, repr. Woodbridge, 1998) 106: 'Itchy, sore, pricked with pins and stiff with excrement, and denied even the basic movements of kicking, stretching or sucking its thumb, the only way in which [the baby] could gain a few hours sleep was by being rocked constantly to and fro'.

infancy on f. 124 of the fourteenth-century De Lisle Psalter illustrates to what extent depictions of the various scenes from Nativity to the Presentation in the Temple could be ruled by convention rather than by any sense of logic or 'realism'. Although one often sees the Christ child lying swaddled in his crib in Nativity scenes, many artists did not hesitate to show him fully dressed and capable of sitting up or even standing to receive the homage and gifts of the Magi in Adoration scenes that supposedly took place barely a fortnight later.

As one might expect, there was at least one church claiming to possess a relic of Christ's swaddling clothes. They were mentioned as 'vestimenta infancie ipsius' amongst the relics in the Grande Châsse at Sainte-Chapelle in Paris, together with milk from the Virgin, in the account of the relics' arrival in Paris, the *Translatio sancte corone* written by the monk Gérard of Saint-Quentin-en-l'Isle after 1241.42 The French king Louis IX acquired these and other relics from the Latin emperor of Constantinople, his cousin Baldwin II; the relics were brought over to Paris between 1239 and 1241 and the Sainte-Chapelle was specifically built to house them. The holy swaddling clothes featured in Baldwin II's Act of Cession of June 1247 as 'pannos infantie salvatoris, quibus fuit in cunabulis involutus' and continued to be listed in inventories up to March 1791. The Sainte-Chapelle relics were also the subject of the sequences *De sanctis reliquiis* of c. 1250-60, which survive in a volume in the Biblioteca Capitolare of San Nicola in Bari and in which they were connected with royal ownership and patronage; the author of the sequences associated the swaddling clothes or *panni* with Christ's humanity, love and the newness of life while the *lac virginis* signified sweetness and purity.

Although Christ's swaddling clothes were an interesting relic, they were clearly considered less important than relics associated with the Passion; Sainte-Chapelle's most famous relic was the Crown of Thorns but it also possessed a large fragment of the True Cross and a sample of Christ's blood. Unfortunately, the Grande Châsse was destroyed in the Revolution, and with it most of its relics.

Although the Sainte-Chapelle's relic of Christ's swaddling clothes would appear to possess a quite credible provenance, by the fourteenth century hordes of pilgrims were drawn to Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen) because of a competing relic: Joseph's hose. This relic epitomizes the keen medieval interest in details of Christ's Nativity in the humblest of circumstances, which often characterizes depictions of the event, particularly in the later Middle Ages and in Early Netherlandish art; here one may find not only midwives in action but even Joseph

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42 The information on the Sainte-Chapelle relics in this paragraph is based on Karen Gould, 'The Sequences *De sanctis reliquiis* as Sainte-Chapelle Inventories', *Mediaeval Studies* 43 (1981) 315-41, which discusses and lists them.
occasionally lending a hand with cooking and other chores. According to one tradition, it was in a search for swaddling clothes that Joseph was to create one of the most unusual relics, viz. his own hose or socks. As we saw in the previous chapter, swaddling clothes were considered essential for young infants. The fourteenth-century author of the Virgin's Song in BL MS Harley 7322, which was quoted earlier, already voiced a concern for the well-being of the Christ child when his mother clearly had nothing in which to clothe him and keep him warm in the cold December nights, and this idea appears to have worried others, too, to judge by a tradition that emerged on the Continent some time in the mid fourteenth century.43 The story is referred to in a number of Middle-German and Middle-Dutch lyrics on the Nativity, such as in a Christmas carol printed in Antwerp in 1508:

Op luttel hoey wert hi gheleyt,
Josephs coussen syn erste cleyt,
Daer wert hi in ghewonden.44

Joseph's hose also feature in the Weihnachtsspiel from Hessen of c. 1450-60, when the Virgin laments the fact that she has neither 'wundeln nach wundelsbant' with which to protect her son from the cold; Joseph promptly offers to wrap the child in his 'zwo alt hoBen'.45 An early reference to Joseph's hose can be found in the visions of the Blessed Margareta Ebner (c. 1291-1351), a Dominican nun at Maria-Medingen, who interrogated the Christ child about the poor circumstances of his birth and early infancy, and more specifically about the story of the transformation of Joseph's own hose: "'Kint mins, ist daz auch war, daz dich Joseph want in sin hosen, wan daz was mir ie wider gewesen'. ez sprach: "er want mich in waz er gehaben moht, er het nit daz mir zem".46 The tradition illustrates the medieval need to explain the details of the Virgin's presumed confinement far away from the comfort of a regular nursery with midwives in attendance and everything in readiness, thus further emphasizing Christ's humility. Instead, it is Joseph in his role of the family provider, rather than that of a natural

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43 See Joz. de Coo, 'En Maria wikkelde het Kind in Jozefs kousen', Antiek 5:5 (1970) 297-310; earlier papers on this subject by the same author were published in Oud-Holland and, most extensively, in Aachener Kunstblätter (1965).
44 Quoted by De Coo (1970) 298, from the carol 'Ons naket eenen soeten tijt' in the 1508 collection 'Dat is een suwerlijke boecxken', 33. Transl.: He was laid on a little hay, Joseph's socks being his first clothes in which he was swaddled.
45 Jozef de Coo, "'In Josephs Hosen Jhesus gewonden wert': Ein Weihnachtsmotiv in Literatur und Kunst", Aachener Kunstblätter 30 (1965) 155; Fronig (1892) vol. 3, II. 592 and 600.
46 De Coo (1965) 154. Transl.: 'My child, is it also true that Joseph wound you in his hose, for that was always distasteful to me.' It [the Christ child] spoke: 'He wound me in what he happened to have, he had nothing that befitted me.'
father, who finds the solution for the lack of swaddling clothes by donating his hose.

The story is illustrated in a number of works produced by German, Dutch and Flemish painters, one of the earliest being the Nativity panel by an unknown artist (sometimes ascribed to Jean Malouel) in the Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Antwerp; usually dated somewhere between 1390 and 1410, it originally formed part of a quadriptych together with five other panels divided between Antwerp and the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore. In the Nativity panel, an aproned midwife on the right is shown looking after the naked Christ child in his manger while the Virgin lies on a mattress watching a barefooted Joseph cutting open his hose. The same scene also occurs in many other paintings as well as in a relief on the Westphalian silver shrine of St Regina in the church at Rhyner near Hamm, dated 1457; a reference to the sacred hose may also be included in the Adoration panel of Rogier van der Weyden's St Colomba altar of c. 1460 in Munich, where the two square pieces of differently coloured cloth in the manger could represent the converted hose of the nearby Joseph. Although the story of Joseph's hose appears to be a purely continental theme, it has been claimed that they even appear at quite an early date in the Nativity scene on f. 12 of the English Holkham Bible Picture Book of c. 1330.

Nor were Joseph's hose simply an oral and visual tradition for they were actually revered as a holy relic in the treasury of the cathedral in Aix-la-Chapelle; tradition has it that they originally came from Jerusalem via Constantinople to Aix, where they were only rediscovered when a fire in the Minster caused the Reliquentruhe to be opened and their contents translated to a special Marienschrein on 19 March 1239 - St Joseph's feastday. Here at Aix, from the first half of the fourteenth century on, the hose were publicly shown from the high gallery to pilgrims once every seven years - a tradition that still survives. Joseph's hose was a hugely popular relic, attracting pilgrims and processions from as far as Hungary and Bohemia but also from Lorraine, Holland and the Burgundian...

49 De Coo (1965) 163-64, n. 97 and pl. 24; according to De Coo, the interpretation was personally confirmed to him by W O Hassall, editor of the facsimile edition of the Holkham Bible Picture Book (London, 1954), but inspection of the manuscript failed to persuade this author.
51 De Coo (1970) 299. Joseph's hose are preserved in Aix and still ritually displayed; De Coo mentions such an occasion in 1965, when they were also exhibited in the cathedral choir for a few days; the next occasion should be in 2000.
territories; duke Philip the Good himself attended the Zeigung in 1440. A literary reference to their ritual display is to be found in several lyrics, including another Middle-Dutch carol from the fifteenth century:

Joseph die tooch altehant
die hosen van den benen sijn,
die men ons noch tAken latet sien,
ende daer toe dat wal hilige cleet,
daer Got sene mensheint in ontfenck.

Moreover, there are pilgrims' souvenirs showing this very holy relic, ranging from woodcut prints to medals, badges and flasks and dating from the fifteenth century onwards; the relic of Joseph's hose is shown in a simple pilgrimage print of 1468 or 1475 and also in a more elaborate woodcut accompanying a description of the relic in a small book printed in 1517 describing the relics at six pilgrimage sites.

The texts underneath both images explain the nature of the relics: 'Item Iosephs hosen do ihesus in gewonden wart und in die krippen geleit wart' and 'Les Chausse de Sainct Joseph . esquelx nostre seigenur fut enuelopez en la creche deuant le Beuf et Lasne'.

Christ, then, suffered the humility of not just a makeshift cradle but also of re-used hose for swaddling clothes. Of course, to medieval people every detail of Christ's life was of the greatest interest, especially if it could provide them with relics. All the same, the great reverence shown to two relics of Christ's swaddling clothes, and one of these of a rather unusual nature, shows that these humblest of human garments had a particular appeal; infancy, and swaddling, were something that every medieval adult would have had in common with Christ, and swaddling clothes clearly marked both his humanity and humility.

52 De Coo (1958) 192; although pilgrims from France appear to have been few, perhaps preferring their own relics in the Sainte-Chapelle, prayers were officially said for both the Holy Roman emperor and the king of France at the ritual displays in Aix. De Coo noted in yet another article, 'De voorstelling met de "Jozefskousen" in het veelluik Antwerpen-Baltimore toch niet uniek', Oud-Holland 75:3/4 (1960) 227, that the French Jesuit excluded the Aix relics from his 1644 book La Gloire de S. Ioseph representée dans ses principales grandeurs, instead referring his readers to a piece of Joseph's mantle used to cover the Christ child in his manger and preserved as a relic in Rome.

53 Quoted by De Coo (1970) 299, from the carol 'Van vrouden ons die kinder singhen'. Transl.: Joseph immediately pulled the hose from his legs, which one still shows us at Aix, and thereto that very holy cloth in which God assumed his humanity.

54 See De Coo (1970) 298 and plates 1-2. For the 1517 book, see also Erich Stephany in Achthundert Jahre Verehrung der Heiligen Drei Könige in Köln, 1164-1964, Kölner Domblatt (Jahrbuch des Zentral-Dombauvereins) (Cologne, 1964) 168; this book, tentatively ascribed to Arnt van Aich, measures about 10 x 7 cm and describes the relics at Maastricht, Aix, Cornelimünster, Düren, Cologne and Trier.
The Cradle

Besides swaddling, the cradle is a key characteristic of the infant in medieval culture. Repeated warnings by the Church against overlaying by taking one's child into bed would suggest that the cradle was an underused item yet many families appear to have owned some form of cradle or other. As an - apparently - everyday type of object the cradle occurs frequently in medieval art, not just in scenes of daily life but also in illustrations of the Dance of Death and even in some depictions of the Massacre, as we shall see. However, the cradle could also be a cult object, as is suggested not only by its prominence in especially the Middle-German Nativity plays but also in the devotional use of miniature jésueaux or 'Christmas cradles'. It therefore seems worthwhile to study the different aspects of the cradle in greater detail.

The appearance of the medieval cradle

As one might expect, little physical evidence of the medieval cradle seems to have survived prior to the fifteenth century, while those early examples that have come down to us are usually the more prestigious ones instead of the more commonly used types. Of course, cradles would have been in almost constant use, the more enduring ones being handed down in families or lent out to relatives and friends, until they became worn out and had to be replaced. Most cradles that one finds depicted in art appear to have been made of wood, and many such would ultimately have ended up as firewood once they had become too worn out for use. The Archäologisches Landesmuseum in Schleswig has in its collection the remains of a wooden head end of a rocking cradle complete with its curved beam, carved decorations, and a slit as a grip for easy carrying at the top, which is said to date back to the twelfth century.55 In Britain the earliest known complete example to survive is a suspended wooden rocking cradle preserved in the Museum of London; although traditionally known as Henry V's cradle, it is more likely to date from the late fifteenth century.56 However, more common may have been the basket type made of osier-twigs, which would be relatively simple to make and cheap to replace, but also extremely unlikely to last long or leave any evidence behind.

The lack of surviving examples or archaeological evidence means that one must look elsewhere for clues about cradles, their use and appearance, and medieval art would seem to be an obvious place. However, cradles in art can

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55 See Riché and Alexandre-Bidon (1994) 53; apparently, 52, archaeologists have even found marks of a seventh-century rocking cradle in the soil of a house in the village of Brebières.
appear much more fanciful than they might have done in real life, especially when artists used them simply as a device to suggest the presence of an infant in no matter what type of environment. Of course, medieval art would only rarely have depicted the more basic types of cradles that poorer people might have resorted to, if they did not simply take their infants into bed with them. In one instance, authors have claimed that barely three per cent of households in fourteenth-century Burgundy owned a cradle but one may wonder what evidence there is to support such a statement.\textsuperscript{57} Instead we must be aware of the fact that what artists usually depicted was the 'ideal standard' type of cradle: immediately recognizable even when not universally affordable. If one bears this in mind, then the wooden rocking cradle was clearly the overall favourite with visual evidence abounding in medieval art. The rocking cradle seems to have come in at least three distinct varieties: the most basic type would have been a low model without legs or supports, which rocks because of its curved shape, sometimes with the help of additional rounded rocking beams; this type of cradle might be moved around the house or even used as a means of transport for the baby. In art one often finds depictions of a second type, the conventional high rocking cradle standing on curved beams; this type can be divided into two distinct varieties, i.e. the more common ones that rocked sideways and those that rocked front to back. The latter type was apparently already criticized as unhealthy in its direction of movement by Raymond Lull in the thirteenth century;\textsuperscript{58} nonetheless, one still finds it in the Kassel \textit{danse macabre} manuscript of c. 1470.\textsuperscript{59} Finally, the most sophisticated would have been the swinging type suspended from two upright supports, like the surviving cradle in the Museum of London.

As the infant inside a cradle would normally be swaddled, it was obviously important to secure it safely to avoid the child being hurt while the cradle was rocked; for this purpose many cradles feature apertures in their sides, through which bands could be inserted with which to fasten the child to the cradle and keep it in position. This can be observed in 'Henry V's cradle' in London as well as in a wonderfully detailed, late fifteenth-century print of the birth of the Virgin by Israel van Meckenem, in which one attendant hangs out (swaddling?) clothes to dry while another tests the temperature of the baby's bath water with her bare foot; in the bottom right corner stands an empty rocking cradle with ribbons or bands strapped zigzag across the top through slits in the side panels. The cradle in London and the

\textsuperscript{57} Riché and Alexandre-Bidon (1994) 52, without reference to a source for this claim.

\textsuperscript{58} Riché and Alexandre-Bidon (1994) 53, again without a specific source being mentioned, although it is probably an interpretation of a passage in Lull's \textit{Doctrina pueril}.

comparison with Van Meckenem's print also explain how the criss-cross bands in some less-detailed depictions are supposed to have functioned. How practical these bands could be is illustrated by an episode in the second tale by master Bausillas in the Middle-English framework romance *The Seven Sages of Rome*, in which a greyhound is defending his master's baby son in his cradle from an intruding serpent while the family and servants are away:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Pe credil welterd on je grownd} \\
\text{Vp-so-down, with piare fyghting,} \\
\text{So hat je childe lay grouelyng.} \\
\text{Pe foure stulpes held vp je childe,} \\
\text{Dat he was nowhe hurt ne filde.}
\end{align*}
\]

In other words, the cradle turned over completely onto its four posts, leaving the baby unhurt and suspended in its bands; it is not clear whether this was supposed to have been a rocking cradle, which would make a complete turn more feasible, but similar posts seem to have been a not uncommon feature on medieval cradles. Later types of cradle could also have knobs along the top rims instead with the same purpose, as one may still see on the more commonly surviving cradles from the seventeenth century.61

Cradles were also used to transport children in; it must, after all, be remembered that royal and aristocratic households in the medieval period were apt to travel from one residence to another. What this would do for vulnerable newborn infants can only be guessed but they could be taken along on such journeys, as can be proved from the surviving account scroll listing the household expenses of little Humphrey de Bohun, who was born to the countess of Hereford around 10 September 1304 but died before the end of the following month.62 The scroll lists daily expenses of viii d. paid to four 'garciones' for carrying the child on his daily progress from his place of birth at Knaresborough down south via

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60 *The Seven Sages of Rome*, in French and Hale (1964) ll. 834-38. This story was also known through the very similar legend of the holy greyhound Guinefort, whose subsequent cult in the diocese of Lyons involving attempts to exchange weak 'changeling' babies for healthy specimens was abolished in the thirteenth century; see chapter 2 and Schmitt (1983). The detail of the cradle landing on its four top posts is not to be found in the Guinefort version, however.  
62 See Charles Peers and Lawrence E Tanner, 'On Some Recent Discoveries in Westminster Abbey', *Archaeologia* 93 (1949) 151-55 and the account scroll of daily expenses of Humphrey de Bohun, P.R.O. E.101. 365/17. The countess Elizabeth, daughter of Edward I, had earlier accompanied her husband to Scotland. Peers and Tanner, 151, mention payments to religious bodies suggesting disquietude about the baby's health after which 'on 15th October a sad little procession started from Knaresborough towards London' - but why travel to London at all with a sick infant: to seek medical aid, or simply because the earl had business there to attend to anyway? Surely this 'sad little procession' was not in anticipation of the child's burial at Westminster Abbey?
Nottingham, Leicester, Sileby and Northampton until the child finally died at Fulham. In Marie de France's *lai* of *Milun*, the hero's illegitimate baby son is laid in a cradle for transport to his married aunt in Northumbria:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Puis le cuchent en un bercel,} \\
\text{Envolupé d'un blanc linçel.} \\
\text{Dedesuz la teste a l'enfant} \\
\text{mistrent un oreiller vaillant} \\
\text{E desuz lui un covertur} \\
\text{Urle de martre tut entur.}\end{align*}
\]

Nothing else is said of the cradle itself although one may remember how *en route* from South Wales to Northumbria the cortège stopped seven times a day to rest, feed and bathe the baby. In the *lai*-like Middle-English romance *Sir Degaré*, the newborn eponymous hero is also wrapped 'in clothes stille, / and laid [...] in a cradel anon' to be transported by a single maid-servant to the cell of a hermit; in typical romance fashion the unmarried princess apparently has no problem in finding a cradle sturdy enough to hold both the child, four pounds of gold and ten pounds of silver.64 In medieval art one sometimes sees children being transported in cradles on the backs or shoulders of one of their parents although these are sometimes supposed to represent the poorer classes, albeit not too poor to be shown as owning a cradle - perhaps another example of artistic licence? As we shall see, mothers carrying a cradle along when summoned by Death also occur in some versions of the *danse macabre*.

As stated earlier, there is little enough surviving or reliable evidence for the variation in appearance of medieval cradles themselves, let alone the bedding or other fixtures inside. Occasionally one may obtain a glimpse through details mentioned in written sources, such as the description by Étienne de Bourbon of how mothers in the Dombes area would leave their ailing infants lying naked under a tree on straw from their cradles in the hope of obtaining instead a healthy baby through the holy greyhound Guinefort.65 Of course, straw was an obvious and easily available bedding material although something more comfortable may have been in use for the cradles of infants in wealthier households. Whatever the style or degree of luxury in its finish and fittings, the cradle, like the baby-walker, seems to have been a common enough piece of furniture to be recognized by everyone, including those who could only aspire to such luxury. All the same, even those

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63 Rychner (1966) II. 99-104. Trans.: Then they put him in a cradle, covered in a white linen sheet. Under the child's head they placed a costly pillow and over him a coverlet with a border of marten skin all around.

64 *Sir Degaré*, II. 184-85ff in French and Hale (1964).

65 See also chapter 2. Étienne de Bourbon's exemplum is quoted in full in Schmitt (1983) 3-4: 'ad pedem arboris super stramina cunabuli nudum puerum ponebant'.
who could afford, or did have, a cradle may have been tempted to take their children into bed with them, a practice that was not always without risk.

**Overlaying**

The risk of overlaying a baby was well known in Antiquity; Soranus already warned that wetnurses should not take infants into bed with them but instead lay them in a cradle either alongside, or on the bed. The Church was also well aware of the risk to infants who were taken to sleep in their parents' beds. John Mirk's handbook for priests contains a long list of questions to be asked in confession which, in between two queries on strife with one's wife and household and teaching one's children good manners, includes the following: 'Hast þow also by hyre I-layn, / And so by-twene 3ou þe chylde I-slayn?' The question of intention is left unclear and both parents seem to be considered culpable. Usually it was mothers who were held to blame, as suggested by the verdict of the Parson in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (l. 575): 'Eek if a womman by negligence overlyeth hire child in hir slepyng, it is homycide and deedly synne'. Whatever the everyday reality of such overlaying, the Bible certainly provided one example in the story of Solomon's Judgment in 1 Kings 3:16-28, especially verses 16-21:

16 Then there came two women that were harlots, to the king, and stood before him:
17 And one of them said: I beseech thee, my lord, I and this woman dwelt in one house, and I was delivered of a child with her in the chamber.
18 And the third day, after that I was delivered, she also was delivered, and we were together, and no other person with us in the house, only we two.
19 And this woman's child died in the night: for in her sleep she overlaid him [dormiens quippe oppressit eum].
20 And rising in the dead time of the night, she took my child from my side, while I thy handmaid was asleep, and laid it in her bosom: and laid her dead child in my bosom.
21 And when I rose in the morning to give my child suck, behold it was dead: but considering him more diligently when it was clear day, I found that it was not mine which I bore.

Was it as a social comment that the Netherlandish illuminator included an infant in a wooden rocking cradle in the margin below the miniature of Solomon's Judgment in the Hours of Catherine of Cleves, dated c. 1440, as if in contrast to the harlots' less acceptable sleeping arrangements?

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67 Peacock (1902) II. 1367-68.
68 One case in which both parents were brought before the Rochester court for having 'smothered' their daughter is quoted in R H Helmholz, 'Infanticide in the Province of Canterbury during the Fifteenth Century', *History of Childhood Quarterly (Journal of Psychohistory)* 2 (1975) 381.
69 Actually 3 Kings 3:16-28 in the Vulgate.
70 See the facsimile edition by Plummer (1966) plate 52.
The practice of taking an infant into bed may well have been widespread, but evidence only survives of cases where it appears to have led to disaster, i.e. mainly in coroners' inquests and miracle tales. The reasons for the perseverance of this practice may have varied, from lack of a cradle or simply of space, to a habit of sleeping together for warmth. A more practical reason, however, may have been that it would have facilitated feeding during the night for many cases involve the mother falling asleep while holding the child in her arms, often in families that could afford to go on pilgrimage and who therefore should equally have been able to obtain a cradle. This was how one near-fatal accident was recorded in one miracle report when a grandmother noticed one night that she had for some time heard neither her daughter's voice nor the baby whimpering while it was being breastfed; upon entering the bedroom she found the mother had fallen asleep and suffocated or crushed her child.\(^\text{71}\) Similar cases can be found elsewhere, for example in a collection of miracles attributed to the miraculous statue of Our Lady in the cathedral of Bois-le-Duc, which records how on 18 June 1383 in Amsterdam swaddled three-week-old Outgheer was 'versmort' in the arms of his sleeping mother Lubbrecht, wife of the 'gruitmeester' Jan Dirksz Russchen; the child was unswaddled and revived after an hour, once the mother had vowed to make a pilgrimage and offerings to Our Lady at Bois-le-Duc.\(^\text{72}\) The same collection records how one month later, on 19 July 1383, two-week-old Heyman from Capelle near Geertruidenberg met the same fate when lying in the arms of his mother Gheertrut, who 'lach inden crame'; he, too, recovered after two hours, once his father had risen from his bed and offered to go on pilgrimage in special pilgrim's costume.\(^\text{73}\)

Infanticide in the medieval period is still an emotional and hotly debated topic with evidence being proposed and interpreted in radically different ways and where even apparently accidental death may be attributed to infanticidal impulses in the medieval subconscious.\(^\text{74}\) Indications of unnaturally high sex ratios in favour of males in earlier societies have made researchers wonder, and female infanticide is one possible explanation of a preponderance of males in society and the larger

\(^\text{71}\) Quoted from MS Fell 2, f. 14v-15, on St Edmund Rich by Finucane (1977) 109; notwithstanding this example, Finucane offered the habit of sleeping together for warmth as an overall explanation for the cause of overlaying. Of course, it may be that there was a cradle after all, but that the accident happened during the last feed for the night.

\(^\text{72}\) Hens \textit{et al.} (1978) no. 145.

\(^\text{73}\) Hens \textit{et al.} (1978) no. 176: Gheertrut's lying-in period obviously extended to at least a fortnight.

\(^\text{74}\) See, for example, Barbara A Kellum, 'Infanticide in England in the Later Middle Ages', \textit{History of Childhood Quarterly} 1:3 (1974) 367-88, whose introduction hinted at 'the possibility that a widespread infanticidal component was present in the medieval personality'.
proportions of male adult skeletons found in some cemeteries.\textsuperscript{75} However, as one author admitted, under-reporting of female children could be one of many contributing factors in these sex ratios, while evidence from (partly) excavated cemeteries should also be treated with caution in view of the fact that they do not necessarily offer a complete or straightforward picture of the average community.\textsuperscript{76}

All the same, there might always have been 'negative infanticide' of economically less desirable female children along the lines of the maxim 'Thou shalt not kill, but thou shalt not strive over-zealously to keep alive'.\textsuperscript{77} Such 'negative infanticide' might have been generally ignored by society and the Church alike but it is still largely based on a modern interpretation of not always reliable data. In reality, even 'positive infanticide' is very hard to prove, and this is still the case nowadays, despite all the advances in forensic science. Infants are simply vulnerable beings for whom a seemingly harmless hit on the head can subsequently still prove fatal through internal hemorrhage; as for smothering, this may leave even less evidence and none whatsoever in the excavated remains of deceased infants. Yet besides these unnatural causes of death, there is still the enigma of so-called cot-death, which continues to baffle scientists now and which must have seemed even more suspicious in the past when it would have been hard to understand why a seemingly healthy baby should suddenly be found dead without any visible signs of illness or injury.

Suspiciously high proportions of forty-week-old infant skeletons found in Roman cemeteries indicate that infanticide as a means of population control was almost certainly practised in Roman Britain, which tallies with attitudes towards newborn children in Antiquity when the \textit{pater familias} decided whether a child should be accepted as a new member of the household;\textsuperscript{78} a preponderance of male adult skeletons found in cemeteries of this period may further indicate that female infants were the most common victims of infanticide.\textsuperscript{79} However, the medieval period offers far less evidence either for reliable sex ratios or for infanticide. One might hope that the current advances in sexing child skeletons may provide more reliable evidence about the actual male-female ratios but it would still remain as difficult as ever to find unambiguous physical signs of unnatural death amongst

\begin{itemize}
\item Simon Mays, 'Killing the Unwanted Child', \textit{British Archaeology} 2 (March 1995) 9.
\item See Boswell (1988).
\item Mays (1995) 8-9.
\end{itemize}
medieval infants. Although it would go too far to enter the infanticide debate any further, one must spare a thought for those medieval mothers who did thus find their children dead in their arms or their beds and who, for lack of any other explanation and in the face of the common belief in overlaying, must have believed themselves guilty of killing their own children.

Evidence of the cradle in everyday life
Whatever Church warnings against overlaying might suggest, the cradle is a frequently appearing object in medieval culture. In another one of Marie de France's lais, Le Fresne, the porter's widowed daughter at the abbey where the baby is abandoned, is described as suckling her baby in its cradle, thus avoiding the risk of overlaying. Babies were not necessarily safe in a cradle, however, as some surviving documents show. One of the Bois-le-Duc miracles for 1383 concerns little Everart, who first appeared to be still-born and then twelve weeks later, when his mother had failed to fulfil her vow of pilgrimage after his miraculous recovery, was found dying in his cradle with his mouth gaping and his eyes seemingly broken, without there being an obvious cause.

It is from such sometimes casual references to cradles in miracle reports and coroners' inquests that one may obtain some idea of how commonly used the cradle might have been amongst the different ranks of medieval society. A number of cases involve quite horrific injury actually due to the use of a cradle, albeit in combination with other contributing factors. Some miracles describe children being (semi-)strangled by the belts which should have kept them secure in their cradles. One of these from a collection of miracles attributed to St Thomas Cantilupe (d. 1282), bishop of Hereford, relates how three-month-old Margery fell out of her cradle while her mother Sibilla was away sheep-shearing some time around 1289; Sibilla had left only another young child in attendance and on her return found her baby hanging upside down from the cradle bands and seemingly dead. In a second example, which happened one night in August 1490 in the village of Brackley near Oxford, six-month-old George was put in his cradle simply rolled in a cloth (instead of swaddled) and tied with his mother's linen belt; George managed to wriggle out of his cloth and was strangled by the belt around his neck as he fell out of his cradle, which was how his mother discovered him when she

80 I am grateful to Dr Jenny Wakely of Pre-Clinical Sciences, University of Leicester, for our discussion of infanticide and the references she has given me; new methods of sexing skeletons and interpreting any evidence of gender bias are part of the PhD research of Clare Duncan, School of Archaeological Studies, University of Leicester.
81 Hens et al. (1978) no. 240.
82 Example given in Finucane (1997) 40.
awoke later that night to breastfeed him. In both these cases, the cradles seem somehow to have been left suspended above the floor, thus allowing the children to be caught in their bands as they fell out; they would probably have been the most common type of low cradle, which one also finds being carried around in medieval art. Both miracles appear to have taken place in relatively simple households; Sibilla clearly had no servant to look after her children while she was at work outside.

There could be very good reasons for leaving a cradle suspended above the floor, seemingly out of harm's way, for children were not necessarily safe in their cradles on the floor. Barbara Hanawalt cited one gruesome example of one-month-old Joanna, daughter of Bernard de Irlaunde, being attacked and killed in her cradle by a sow that wandered into the London shop and bit her in the head; Joanna's mother had left the baby alone in the shop with the door open. Although this might have been a freak accident, two similar cases are recorded in Flanders, which resulted in the offending animals being officially condemned and executed: in one case it was a boar that was hanged, while in the other example recorded at Dikkebus in 1459 a murdering sow was buried alive after attacking a temporarily unattended baby in its cradle. Similar attacks by animals on infants left alone in their cradles are recorded in France.

Infants might also die in fires, not just by being left behind in their cradle when a fire broke out within the house but also by fires actually starting in their cradles. Hanawalt claimed that according to the coroners' inquests she studied, out of fifty-eight children under one year of age recorded in inquests thirty-three per cent died in cradle fires; an additional fourteen per cent of one-year-olds died from the same cause. Moreover, twenty-one per cent of recorded infant deaths was due to children left unattended dying in house fires. Older children could also suffer; at eighteen months, Robert son of Walter might have escaped if he had not been tied in his cradle. Again animals appear to have been a risk factor as

84 Barbara A Hanawalt, 'Childrearing Among the Lower Classes of Late Medieval England', Journal of Interdisciplinary History 8 (Summer 1977) 15.
85 Examples cited by Pablo Fernandez, Het verschijnsel kindermoord in de Nederlanden (XIVde-XVde eeuw), Studia Historia Gandensia 267 (1986) 128-29 and esp. note 101. In the Dikkebus case the father had gone to vespers with four of his children while the mother had left the remaining four children alone to say her farewells to a visiting cousin outside the house.
86 See also Coulton (1928) vol. 3, no. 76, 152-53 on animals before the law, which includes the case at Laon of the young pig that was condemned to be hanged for the crime of killing the cowherd Jehan Lenfant's infant son in his cradle on the manor of Clermont-lez-Montcornet.
87 Hanawalt (1986) 175; further examples and figures regarding cradle fires can be found in Hanawalt, 'Childrearing Among the Lower Classes of Late Medieval England, Journal of Interdisciplinary History 8 (1977) 14-15, with distribution tables outlining the causes of children's accidents, although Hanawalt's use of percentages should be treated with some caution.
88 Hanawalt (1986) 175.
chickens were frequently named as having caused fires by pecking about the open hearth for food and thereby scattering sparks or burning twigs, or by their feathers actually catching fire; as cradles were often placed near the hearth for warmth, one can easily see how such cradle fires might get started, especially with children being wrapped in linen or wool that would allow a fire to smolder.\(^8\)\(^9\) While some parents may have chosen to take their children with them while working in the field,\(^9\)\(^0\) others must have thought it safe to leave them behind at home tied to their cradles, as is sometimes also told in medieval exempla.\(^9\)\(^1\)

Although it may not have been in everyone's reach to own a cradle, evidence suggests that, at least in medieval England, the cradle was much more common than the three per cent suggested for Burgundian households in the fourteenth century. Certainly, sheep-stealing Mak and his wife happen to own a cradle to use in their cunning plan in the Towneley Second Shepherds' Play. In Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, part of the midnight confusion in the Reeve's Tale of the duped miller hinges on the presence of a cradle, which his wife is used to keeping close to her: 'The cradel at hir beddes feet is set, / to rokken, and to yeve the child to sowke' (ll. 4156-57). This cradle was obviously envisaged as one easy to move around, which is what student John does, and probably also a rather low one as all the various characters have to grope to find it when trying to locate the correct bed. The miller may not have had more than the single bedroom but it was clearly thought natural for him to own a cradle.

**The cradle as a status symbol**

Although we cannot know how many people had access to cradles, either to buy or to borrow, they were a prominent feature in medieval art and culture. The cradle was not just for the comfort and safety of the baby, but could also serve as a status symbol. It will be obvious that royal and aristocratic babies were given particularly sumptuous cradles with rich furnishings; apparently, from the Middle Ages onwards, noble infants often had two cradles, one state cradle for use during the day and a smaller one for use at night, or even a special one for ceremonial use.\(^9\)\(^2\) In addition, special 'rockers' were appointed to look after the infant: English royal

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\(^8\) Hanawalt (1986) 175.
\(^9\) Finucane (1997) 125, records the case of eighteen-month-old Geoffrey who was lying asleep on the ground when his head was crushed by the wheel of his father's plough.
\(^9\) Tubach (1969) no. 434: *Ave Maria saves child*. A mother who has to carry food to her husband in the fields, has no one to watch over her child in the cradle. She blesses the child with an "Ave Maria." While she is gone, the house burns down but the child is unharmed.'
\(^9\) Kevill-Davies (1998) 107-8. Two cradles were also in use at the fifteenth-century ducal court of Brabant, the one being an ostentatious cradle of state and the other for daily use; see Sommé in Cauchies (1998) 37. Sommé also provides detailed information on the materials used for furnishing the ducal cradle.
accounts include several mentions of such *berceuses* or *berceresses*, for example in the household accounts of the children of Edward I.\(^9\) The knight's son in Master Bausillas' tale in *The Seven Sages of Rome* is also provided with 'thre norices', *viz.* one to suckle him, one to wash and clothe him, and a third who 'wasshes be shetes oft / And rokkes it on slepe soft' (ll. 793-94). Four nursery attendants were employed at the Burgundian court of Philip the Good, including a *berceresse*.\(^4\)

Cradles were sometimes given as part of a rich maiden's dowry, together with other items for the future nursery such as linen and even a baby's bath, as one might read in a Middle-High-German poem of c. 1300 about St Elizabeth of Hungary, in which the saint's mother commissions a silver cradle and baby bath as part of her daughter's trousseau:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Si hiz ir balde machen} \\
\text{Nach fruntlichen sachen} \\
\text{Von silber lodec wize} \\
\text{Mit druwelichen filze} \\
\text{Deme Kinde ein zuberlin,} \\
\text{So ez wehes Kunde sin,} \\
\text{Da man iz inne mohite} \\
\text{Baden wan iz dohte.} \\
\text{Si hiz ouch balde bigen} \\
\text{Von silber eine wigen} \\
\text{In wunderlicher gunste} \\
\text{Nach meisterlicher kunste,} \\
\text{Da man daz Kint in legete,} \\
\text{So iz die amme degete} \\
\text{Unde mit der spune neme war.}\(^9\) \\
\end{align*}
\]

If this poem is to be believed, the status function of such a costly cradle could take precedence over any considerations of comfort or practical use, and it is difficult to imagine a greater contrast than between St Elizabeth's supposed silver cradle and the humble manger which the Virgin was supposed to have used for her son.

\(^9\) For example, Hilda Johnstone, 'The Wardrobe and Household of Henry, Son of Edward I', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 7 (1922-23) 390, lists three separate nurses for Edward I's eldest children Henry, Eleanor and John, with the services of Alicia de La Grave as their shared *berceresse*; while quoting a Perrette de Poissy as another rocker for Edmund, Edward I's second son by Margaret of France, in note 3. Richard II's nurse was apparently one Eliona de France; see Saul (1997) 13.

\(^4\) See Sommé in Cauchies (1998) 38: the others were a wetnurse, a waiting-woman, and a 'dame de l'enfant a relever de nuit'; also Orme (1984) 12.

\(^9\) Quoted in Robert Müllerheim, *Die Wochenstube in der Kunst* (Stuttgart, 1904) 119, from *Das Leben der Heiligen Elisabeth vom Verfasser der Erlösung*, ll. 497-511. Transl.: She immediately commissioned with faithful care, as is proper for relatives, a bath-tub to be made for the child from pure silver, as beautiful as possible, in which it might bathe when required. She also immediately ordered a cradle to be constructed from silver of wonderful taste and masterful art, in which one would lay the child when the nurse satisfied and breastfed it. I am very grateful to Mr Tobias A Kemper for his help in identifying and translating this poem.
The cradle as a devotional object

Although Christ was traditionally put in a manger, this was not always quite how medieval artists pictured the scene; in twelfth and thirteenth-century depictions this 'manger' is often more like an altar to which the reclining Virgin points proudly, as on the former early thirteenth-century choirscreen or jubé at Chartres Cathedral.96 In literature the manger seems to have somehow become a cradle over which the Virgin sings her lullabies, echoing the types of lullaby sung by medieval mothers and nurses.97 In some of these poems the Virgin is made to voice her lament about their humble situation, e.g. in the Virgin's Song of c. 1375:

Iesu, swete sone dere!
On porful bed list thou here,
And that me greue sore;
For that cradel is as a bere [byre],
Oxe and asse be p[hi fere]98

In a Middle English lyric in the Lambeth MS 853 of c. 1430, Christ is reminded of his Nativity when

In poore aparaille thou were pîxt.
Ihesu! thou were in cradil knyt,
In wade wrappid bope day & nyxt (ll. 16-18)99

The popularity of such lyrics is evident from their surviving numbers, but they also illustrate the medieval preoccupation with the humble beginnings of Christ's life on earth, more so than that of many children: being born in a stable with a mere manger for a cradle. Yet it was a cradle of sorts, and artists as well as authors were apt to make quite a feature of it.

The idea of a cradle for Christ at the Nativity is especially prominent in the Middle-German Nativity plays, which remained enormously popular in the German-speaking regions well into the Reformation period; it has been claimed that whereas the tomb was the focal point on stage in the Easter cycle, its

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96 Paul Williamson, *Gothic Sculpture 1140-1300* (New Haven/London, 1995) 47 and pl. 65; the choirscreen was dismantled in 1763.
97 In *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede* the author refers scathingly to 'the lulling of oure Ladye' and to the miracle plays that make women think that the lace of the Virgin's smock may help them in childbirth; see Helen Barr (ed.), *The Piers Plowman Tradition: A Critical Edition of Pierce the Ploughman* (London/Vermont, 1993) II. 77-78.
98 Sisam and Sisam (1970) nr. 87, ll. 1-5.
99 From 'Be my Coumfort, Crist Ihesus!' in Furnivall (1895) 12.
counterpart in the Christmas cycle was the crib. Several of these plays even include Joseph tending to Christ in his crib, and sometimes the theme of 'Kindelwiegen' in special scenes devoted to Joseph rocking Christ's cradle while singing lullabies. In this respect, the character of the theatrical Joseph, who is often presented as somewhat stupid but well-intentioned and rather generous with drinks, is in line with his traditional role of the family-provider, as in the stories about him turning his hose into emergency swaddling clothes. There is the example of the Christmas cycle from Erlau, which dates from the first half of the fifteenth century and in its present form may originate from western Carinthia; it contains the play *Ludus in cunabilis Christi*, which is much less formal than the Latin Nativity plays although the theme of 'Kindelwiegen' is admittedly less prominent or farcical here than in the slightly later version from Hessen. According to the Latin stage directions at the beginning of the Erlau play, the cradle is actually carried by the *obstetrix*, together with the additional implements of a bowl and a spoon, when she enters the stage after Joseph and Mary: 'Tunc sequatur obstetrix portans cunabulum et patellam et coclear'. After providing both himself, the shepherd and the midwife with drinks, Joseph turns to the cradle to devote his attention to the Christ child:

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•Mich zimpt in meinem mut,
dem chind war slaffen gut.
man sol im ze trinkchen geben
und sol es in di wiegen legen.103
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Once this has been done, an angel begins to sing, the *nutrix* joins in while rocking the cradle, and then Joseph joins in while lifting up the child again and continuing to pass round the drinks; it is the shepherd who finally reminds him that the cold might affect the newborn, 'dem chint sei di chelten nicht gut' (1. 50). The company then depart singing in order to continue celebrating somewhere inside.

The *Weihnachtsspiel* from Hessen has already been quoted in connection with Joseph's hose and the 'brij' to be cooked for the newborn Christ child. This play is characterized by a particular interest in the practical aspects of the Nativity

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100 Wolfgang Golther, *Die deutsche Dichtung im Mittelalter 800 bis 1500* (Stuttgart, 1912) 527: 'Das Osterspiel und Weihnachtsspiel waren einfach inszeniert, Grab oder Krippe stand im Mittelpunkt der Szene'.
101 Such scenes can be found in the Erlau *Weihnachtsspiel* from the first half of the fifteenth century, the Hessen *Weihnachtsspiel* of c. 1450-60, and also in the Tirol *Weihnachtsspiel* of c. 1511; see Rolf Bergmann, *Katalog der deutschsprachigen geistlichen Spiele und Marienklage des Mittelalters* (Munich, 1986), nos. 40, 71 and 149. See also Alexander Grünberg, *Das religiöse Drama des Mittelalters: Österreich / Deutschland / Schweiz* (Vienna, 1966) 114ff.
103 Kummer (1977) ll. 45-48. Transl.: It seems to me that it would be well for the child to sleep. One should give him something to drink and put him in the cradle.
and its action is clearly centred around the cradle. While they are still searching for lodgings, one innkeeper turns Joseph and Mary away because the couple will clearly need a cradle, which would take up too much room in his house (ll. 118-19). Soon after, Mary gives birth while Joseph is away trying to find a cradle and on his return, 'portans cunabulum', he is asked to rock the child in the cradle 'uff das es ia schri nicht!' (l. 166). Not only does the old man happily consent to rock the cradle but he also sings and dances around it; thenceforth, other characters in the play join in and variations of the line 'szo woln wir frolich umb die wiege springen!' are repeated throughout the play up to the time of the Flight.

The cradle was obviously an important prop in the German mystery plays but it could also function as a different kind of devotional object in the so-called *jesueau* or Christmas cradle, a type of miniature object that appears to have been particularly popular on the Continent. These *jesueaux* were normally made of wood although the more luxurious ones could be made of far costlier materials. A particularly sumptuous survival is a silver-gilt example dating from the early fifteenth century, which was donated to the bishop of Namur by a Cistercian nun named Sister Scholastique from the convent in Essen on the Rhine a few years before her death in 1856; the object had earlier belonged to the Cistercian abbey of Notre-Dame-du-Vivier at Marche-les-Dames in the province of Namur but Sister Scholastique had herself bought it from among the auctioned possessions of the parish church of Friedberg, near Frankfurt, and had kept it in her cell to help her with her prayers. While such long continued devotional use is in itself exceptional, this highly ornate little cradle is simply stunning with its bells, shields and banners, angels on all four corners, and the figures of Saints Catherine and Barbara in relief at both ends; unlike many surviving *jesueaux*, this cradle still contains its silver miniature Christ child with its gold crown. From the hallmarks it appears that the Namur cradle was bought from a goldsmith at Liège, probably by or for a nun whose family coat of arms features on pendants between the bells; it was a type of devotional object particularly popular with nuns, who would use it in their private devotions, and not just at Christmas, although they could also be found on sideboards in richer households. Although obviously an extremely costly example, the Namur cradle is not a unique survivor as a similar but larger example is

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104 Transl.: [...] in order that it does not cry. It is worth noting that the cradle is Joseph's first concern; the problem of wrapping the baby up does not occur until l. 590ff, and the child's food last of all in l. 612ff.

105 The cradle was exhibited in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam in 1994-95 and discussed in the exhibition catalogue *The Art of Devotion* (1994) 100, 102 and pl. 30. It had earlier been published in J J M Timmers, *De kunst van het Maasland*, vol. 2: De gothiek en de renaissance, Maaslandse Monografieën 1 (Assen, 1980) 193 and pl. 336.
recorded in the Hunt collection at Drumleck-Baily (Co. Dublin).\textsuperscript{106} Another jésueau featuring in a recent exhibition is a Flemish little wooden bed, dating from the early sixteenth century, which belongs to a private collection; it features four angels standing in prayer on top of the bedposts on the four corners of the cradle.\textsuperscript{107}

The popularity of the jésueau as a tangible aid towards private devotion may have been a continental phenomenon but one could compare it with similar feelings experienced by Margery Kempe in England, who not only was reduced to violent grief and tears upon beholding religious imagery and relics on her travels but who also meditated upon the infancy and daily care of both the Virgin and the Christ child. It was for this latter reason that Margery felt herself greatly moved upon beholding the image of what can only have been the Christ child, which a fellow-pilgrim \textit{en route} from Jerusalem to Rome carried with her in a chest and showed to respectable wives to dress up and kiss: '\& þei wold puttyn schirtyþ þerup-on & kyssyn it as þei it had ben God hym-selfe'.\textsuperscript{108} Much earlier saints such as St Anthony of Padua were said to have been rewarded with visions of the Christ child but to some these visions were much more tangible; David Herlihy gave the Italian examples of the Florentine widow Umiliana dei Cerchi (d. 1246) whose prayers were answered when she found the little Jesus playing in her room one night, while St Agnes of Montepulciano (d. 1317) was one night visited in her cell by the Virgin who gave her the infant Christ to hold and fondle.\textsuperscript{109}

Whereas some saints might thus obtain the ultimate blessing of seeing and holding the Christ child, others were happy to use devotional objects such as a statue of the infant Christ or a jésueau to help them in their meditations. The jésueau developed as a cult object in the wake of the naked Christ child, which emerged as a popular devotional figure in nunneries around 1300 to be dressed up and used especially in Christmas plays.\textsuperscript{110} Often raising his right hand in blessing while holding an orb in his left, the image of the naked Christ child was to become incredibly popular especially in the Low Countries and Germany, and many

\textsuperscript{106} Timmers (1980) 193 and note 240. The Namur cradle measures 12 x 12 x 8 cm whereas the Hunt example measures 28 x 26 x 18 cm.
\textsuperscript{107} See the exhibition catalogue \textit{In gotischer Gesellschaft: Spätmittelalterliche Skulpturen aus einer niederländischen Privatsammlung (Die Sammlung Goldschmidt)}, Suermondt-Ludwig-Museum (Aix, 1998) cat. 46; the cradle is made of oak, originally painted, and measures 23.1 x 23.6 x 12 cm.
\textsuperscript{108} Meech (1940) chapter 30, 77. The owner of the image appears to have been Italian and the image itself must have represented a (semi-)naked Christ child.
\textsuperscript{110} \textit{In gotischer Gesellschaft}, cat. 46, 105.
examples survive to attest to its popularity. A well-documented case of personal devotion to the image of the Christ child and its accompanying jésueau is that of Margareta Ebner, who recorded in 1344 that on St Stephen's Day she had been sent from Vienna 'ain Jhesus in ainer wiegen, und dem dienten vier gulden engel', i.e. a figure of the Christ child in a jésueau with four gold angels. Although the cradle has been lost, Margaretha's 28 cm long statuette of the naked Christ child with a bird in his left hand and his right in blessing is still preserved in the Dominican nunnery at Maria-Medingen. Margaretha described how after receiving her desired jésueau she was woken up one night to see the little figure playing in its cradle; when she reproached it for not letting her sleep, it replied that it wanted to be taken out of the cradle and into bed with her - incidentally, a curious reversal of the usual Church injunctions regarding overlaying - where it proceeded to embrace and kiss her. Margaretha even reported that she suckled the little statue at its request: 'in dem empfande ich ainer menschlichen beruerde sines mundez an meinem blozzen herzen'. Fascinating is that before the gift of a jésueau Margaretha only had visions of Christ the Saviour and never of the Christ child, which shows how influential such objects could be in mystical devotion.

Margaretha mentions her jésueau as featuring angels, like the examples from Namur and from the Goldschmidt collection, although these could have taken different forms; some angels are simply shown in prayer whereas others carry musical instruments, books or even the arma Christi. Hers is likely to have been a wooden cradle, perhaps like the suspended rocking cradle with painted angels on its sides dating from c. 1340, which can be found in the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum in Munich, as has been suggested, although many other varieties survive. With its length of 27 cm the Munich cradle would in any case have been too short to accommodate Margaretha's statuette; other jésueaux may have contained pipe-clay figures of the Christ child, which were mass-produced and

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111 Two such statuettes, both from the Birgittine abbey Maria Refugie in Uden, the Netherlands, are shown and discussed in the exhibition catalogue Beelden in de abdij: Middeleeuwse kunst uit het noordelijk deel van het hertogdom Brabant (Uden, 1999) cats. 84-85.
113 Wentzel (1960) plate on p. 282; interestingly, there does survive another jésueau with four naked musical putti at Maria-Medingen dating from 1600, as mentioned by Wentzel, 278.
114 Wentzel (1960) 276. Transl.: With this I felt a human movement of his mouth on my bare breast.
116 In gotischer Gesellschaft, cat. 46, 106.
easily broken or lost. Not all jésueaux were rocking cradles - both the silver Namur cradle and the example exhibited at Aix stand on four sturdy architecturally moulded legs - but many of the surviving examples are elaborately decorated with intricate carving and painting. Many Christmas cradles must have been lost during the Reformation or through subsequent (religious) upheavals, but there is enough evidence to suggest that the jésseau was an extremely popular object from as early as the fourteenth century on; although ostensibly only a piece of miniature everyday furniture it clearly served as an imago pietatis, particularly in nunneries where its real-life counterpart would have had no place whatsoever.

It is interesting to see that, although traditionally the Christ child spent his first days on earth quite humbly in a manger, in medieval culture he was often envisaged in that typical attribute of early infantia: the cradle. It was because of her supposed prophesy on the Nativity of Christ that from the late fifteenth century the Sibylla Samia was depicted with a rocking cradle as her specific attribute; we see her thus with her cradle and the text of her prophesy as the fifth of twelve sibyls in the printed Oracula Sibyllina of c. 1468-70, on f.C2 of the Grandes Heures printed by Antoine Verard in 1488, and also on the lintel of the sculpted retable of c. 1515 in the Charvot chapel in Autun Cathedral. When it came to the cult object of the jésseau artists chose to make that as splendid and elaborate as possible as befitting a divine child, thus emulating the elaborate high-status cradles required for royalty with nuns almost acting as the royal berceuses. Notwithstanding its status-symbol aspect, however, the cradle was at the same time the epitome of infancy and as a jésseau it served to emphasize Christ's humanity and his need for attention and affection as a baby, thus allowing particularly nuns the pseudo-maternal experience of looking after an infant. However idealized, the popularity of such substitute infant care and its elevation to cult status suggest the existence of strong positive emotions regarding the infant as a human being in need of maternal care and attention.

118 This is how the Catharijneconvent in Utrecht displays its wooden jésseau of c. 1500-9, produced in the northern Netherlands (inventory ABM v00025), albeit that the accompanying miniature dolls do not originally belong to this cradle.
119 Wentzel (1960) 278.
120 An unnamed sibyl also appears in the Chester Nativity play to prophesy the birth of Christ to the emperor Octavianus; see R M Lumianski and David Mills (eds), The Chester Mystery Cycle, 2 vols, EETS, s.s. 3 (Oxford, 1974) and s.s. 9 (Oxford, 1986) play VI, II. 349-52, 357-72, 644-50 and 675-82.
121 P Heitz (ed.), Oracula Sibyllina (Weissagungen der zwolf Sibyllen), facsimile edition of the unique copy in the St Gallen Stiftsbibliothek (Strasbourg, 1903).
THE BABY-WALKER

Baby-walkers have been used for centuries to help teach children to walk - an important step in a child's development from infant to toddler. Of course, medieval children could prove quite mobile even without the ability to walk; as we saw in chapter 2, miracle stories and coroners' inquests report cases of children crawling into the road or reaching water, fire or other dangers when they were still only able to go on all fours. In fact, the transition from swaddling to freedom could often spell danger for a child's life if parents or carers were negligent in their attendance; there is no doubt that an ability to move around and explore their surroundings without an understanding of the inherent dangers could prove fatal to toddlers in the Middle Ages - as today - and Death would claim its victims not just through illness but also through accidents.

The existence of the baby-walker in medieval culture suggests an interest in teaching the child to walk safely and soon, just as its occurrence in medieval art indicates that it was a generally familiar object. An early example of the baby-walker is the three-wheel version in the Wheel of Life of c. 1240 by William de Brailes (Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS 330 iv), originally an illumination for a psalter; following a swaddled infant representing the first stage of life, there is a toddler in a short shift walking behind a very early depiction of a three-wheel baby-walker. The example in the fourteenth-century encyclopaedia Omne bonum has already been mentioned.123 Constrictions of space within the initial for Etas no doubt necessitated the limitation to just three figures but it is interesting that the illuminator opted just for childhood, and without the often used icon of the swaddled infant; all three children are dressed in tunics. Incidentally, the theme of an older boy trying to catch a butterfly may be unusual but is again another example of typically childish playfulness, albeit with a hint of the ephemeral about it, the butterfly being the ancient symbol for the soul.

Very often one finds depictions of such older infants enjoying the freedom of complete nudity after the earlier restrictions of their swaddling clothes; as we have seen, such nudity symbolizes their still innocent state. Although anatomically perhaps not totally convincing as an infant, the muscular looking naked figure on a fifteenth-century corbel from the cathedral at Bois-le-Duc is typefied as such through his attribute of a three-wheeled baby-walker.124 Originally part of the church interior, this is unlikely to be a representation of the Christ child and may

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123 See the Ages of Man in chapter 2; also Sears (1986) 130-31 and fig. 66, and Sandler (1996) vol. 2, 176.
124 Presented in the exhibition catalogue Kinderen van Alle Tijden, 's-Hertogenbosch (1997) cat. 28; unfortunately, the authors of the catalogue did not explain the architectural or iconographical context of this corbel.
instead have formed part of a scheme of the Ages of Man although by this period naked infants had become a favourite decorative device in their own right. Similarly, one may see a naked child walking behind a four-wheel baby-walker in the bottom margin of f. 141 of the Hours of Mary of Burgundy, which was illuminated in Flanders in the 1470s.  

The example in William de Brailes' Wheel of Life may look more like a small siege-engine yet the three-wheel (sometimes four-wheel) versions of the baby-walker which children were supposed to walk behind look rather dangerous, and one wonders how children where expected not to push the device too hard and fall over. Alternatively, there were the four-wheel versions with children walking inside them, which seem to have become more usual in the later medieval period; a still rather early example is that of the Christ child in the scene of the Holy Family at work in the Hours of Catherine of Cleves of c. 1440. Other three-wheel examples can be found in the initial for 'Etas' in the fourteenth-century encyclopaedia Omne bonum, in a painting by Hieronymus Bosch in Vienna, on the Bois-le-Duc corbel of c. 1450, and in a late fourteenth-century English embroidered orphrey (Burrell Collection, Glasgow) which shows the Virgin Mary learning to walk with Joachim and Anna watching her progress. Whatever form the baby-walker took, the concept was familiar enough to medieval viewers for artists to use it in order to introduce the toddler stage amongst the Ages of Man.

For adults seeing an infant ready to take its first steps must have been a monumental progress towards childhood, and out of the vulnerable stage of infancy. It also meant a development towards a more rational state for, after all, it is especially the ability to speak and walk on two legs - rather than crawl on all fours - that seems to distinguish humans from animals. However, a child that can walk will easily wander into dangers, just as the ability to talk and reason will eventually lead to 'sin'. The child in its childwalker thus represents a first step towards conscious childhood yet its often accompanying state of nudity still illustrates its innocence.

THE INFANS AT PLAY
As we have seen, swaddling clothes and cradles were not only vital objects in an infant's early life but also attributes of the infans in medieval art and culture. St Elizabeth's supposed dowry in the Middle-High-German poem indicates the baby bath was another necessary item for the nursery and, indeed, there are many

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125 See the facsimile edition by Inglis (1995).
126 See Plummer (1966) pl. 92.
depictions of a baby's first ritual bath after birth, especially in the context of the births of the Virgin, St John the Baptist or occasionally of other saints. However, the bath itself is not normally presented as a typical infant attribute and these tubs may not even always have been specifically designed for such use. The same is true of other baby characteristics: as we have seen, suckling suggests maternal care and can be used to indicate the presence of an infant but does not always have the same icon-like directness of the cradle or swaddling bands. Feeding bottles, jugs or horns also existed as poor substitutes for breast-feeding but they were not commonly used as immediately recognizable infant attributes in medieval art.128

The *infans* is the human child in the early stages of its development, not yet able to walk or talk properly and still learning to coordinate and control its movements through play; as such it became a popular theme in art from the fourteenth century on, as discussed in chapter 2. There were toys for such young children - the rattle being the most obvious example, as held by the swaddled figure of Jean-Saladin d'Anglure of Givry on his tomb slab - and some of these were specifically used by artists to denote the *infans*. Most typical for the young *infans* or toddler was the popular toy of the whirligig or windmill, which can be found in art held by naked putto-like infants who are clearly old enough to walk but otherwise still quite young.129 Several naked children are depicted in the bottom margins of the Hours of Mary of Burgundy, of which two carry whirligigs; the child on f. 157 seems to be chasing the fly painted onto the page while the legs of the other on f. 54v appear to move although the shadow painted behind him creates the illusion that he is actually lying on the page. Other naked or semi-dressed children with whirligigs can be observed in the bottom margin of f. 116 in the northern-French book of hours at Oxford (Bodleian Library, MS Douce 276).130 As the performance of the whirligig depends on the child being able to walk or preferably run, it is a likely toy for a child enjoying his newly discovered ability to walk; it may have served as a device to encourage children to walk although it can also sometimes be seen depicted in the hands of older children in full dress. It is found most typically, however, in combination with children of clear *infantia* age, as in the early fifteenth-century German woodcut of the Ages of Man or in *danse macabre* depictions of Death and the Infant; in the former, the windmill seems to serve as the counterpart of the walking-stick of *senectus* or *decrepitus*. This could well be the context in which one should view the naked Christ(?) child on the

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128 See, for example, Löhmer (1989) 145-48.
130 These are not so much *infantes* as *parvulos* or even *pueri*, as suggested by the enigmatic naked figure of a schoolmaster with his birch, although the children still display a rather *infans*-like chubbiness.
reverse of Hieronymus Bosch' panel of Christ carrying the cross at Vienna (Kunsthistorisches Museum), who combines a windmill with a rather flimsy baby-walker.\textsuperscript{131}

The other archetypal toy for the \textit{infans} was clearly the hobby-horse, and as such its attribute in art.\textsuperscript{132} It illustrates the child's increased ability to walk as well as the typical childish trait of imitating adults with the aid of make-believe toys. The often (semi-)naked state of children depicted with hobby-horses characterizes them as \textit{infantes} rather than \textit{pueri}. In contrast, the whipping-top requires more skill and is more typically the attribute of the young \textit{puer}, who is dressed in a tunic rather than naked; after all, children continued to play beyond the stage of \textit{infantia} but their games and toys were designed to match their increasing abilities.

**CONCLUSION**

As depictions of children in medieval art might might be hard to distinguish from those of adults, in view of their often anatomically unconvincing proportions and size, many artists resorted to additional attributes such as toys to typify the child. Even so, the most unambiguous and recognizable icons to denote 'the child' or 'offspring' were undoubtedly the swaddled infant and the cradle; thus, when the artist came to illuminate the initial for the 'clericus coniugatus' or married cleric in the encyclopaedia \textit{Omne bonum}, he chose to show a swaddled infant in its rocking cradle in the centre between a group of clerics and a group of women as the clearest way of showing marriage and its results.\textsuperscript{133}

Swaddling may have been constrictive and potentially harmful for infants but like the cradle it also suggested protection of a kind; the naked infant looks helpless and vulnerable, especially when nudity in earlier medieval art often had negative connotations, as in Adam and Eve doomed to succumb to temptation or the tortures that some martyrs were condemned to suffer in a (semi-)naked state. It was in a state of nudity that people went to their graves, with merely their shrouds to cover them. The general belief was that the naked infant might fall ill or grow crooked without swaddling; to medieval people swaddling would have meant life, and the swaddled cocoon may have been rather like the chrysalis from which the butterfly will eventually emerge, even when to modern viewers the result is unpleasantly reminiscent of Egyptian mummies. Yet to the medieval infant life and death were

\textsuperscript{131} Marijnissen and Ruyffelaere (1987) 271ff; the panel was probably part of a small triptych. Gary Schwartz, \textit{Hieronymus Bosch}, First Impressions (New York, 1997) 38 (with plates on 36-37) remarked: 'The message could be that everyone on earth, even a little baby is headed for death and needs to be saved by Christ. Or the baby may be Christ himself, acting out his later fate in childish play'.

\textsuperscript{132} Löhmer (1989) 159-64.

\textsuperscript{133} Sandler (1996) vol. 2, 110.
close neighbours and it is perhaps telling that the chrysom cloth, in which a baby was customarily wrapped after baptism, could also serve as its shroud if it failed to survive until the mother's purification.134

The cradle, too, could protect the infant from the risk of overlaying in the parental (or nurse's) bed but at the same time could constitute a hazard in itself, as is evident from reported accidents with fire, roaming animals, violent rocking, cradles toppling over or infants falling out of them. Admittedly, Shorter may have painted a rather one-sided picture by referring to the cradle being 'in peasant hands a benumbing contraption' in which 'wakeful children were commonly knocked into the sleep of insensibility'.135 Yet ridiculing the idea that the cradle could be anything but the ultimate symbol of parental care about the safety and well-being of a baby is equally one-sided.136 Of course, it was clearly regarded and used as a means to keep an infant safe from harm but at the same time, if one bears in mind the high infant mortality, it would also have been the place in which all too many infants died, albeit not usually such violent deaths as those described in some reported accidents. Medieval mothers not infrequently believed it safe enough to leave their swaddled infants in their cradles behind at home without supervision while they were themselves occupied elsewhere; however, if children died when thus left abandoned, their empty cradles may have remained to cause feelings of guilt. Those cradles sturdy enough to remain in use for longer, would almost inevitably have contained dying and dead infants more than once, thus changing from a symbol of hope and protection into a halting-place before death.

Those children who managed to survive their first year awaited the process of developing into proper human beings, i.e. learning to walk and talk. This development harboured its own inherent dangers, however; not only would it ultimately lead the infant from innocence to mortal sin, but the very achievement of learning to move about and finally to walk could land the child in all kinds of dangers, especially when supervision proved less than adequate. Until the infant had developed into a child who possessed the rudimentary skills of walking and talking, it needed the protective restrictions of swaddling bands, cradles and baby-walkers; when still developing these skills, it was presented in art as playing with toys appropriate to its age in naked innocence. These, therefore, were the obvious

134 See Oosterwijk on chrysom effigies, in preparation; the nature of the chrysom cloth, which originally was probably just a piece of cloth to cover the anointed spot on the child's forehead, still requires further study.
135 Shorter (1979) 172; Shorter largely focussed on the post-medieval period.
136 Referring to this same passage by Shorter, Riché and Alexandre-Bidon (1994) 210, note 2 to chapter II.2, claimed: 'Il n'en reste pas moins qu'on peut impunément confondre un objet de puériculture, témoin du souci du bien-être et de la sécurité des enfants - les hommes du Moyen Age l'affirment - avec un instrument de martyre, et l'écrire'.
attributes which helped to present and identify the image of the *infans* in medieval culture.
Chapter 4. THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS:

'Longe lulynge haue I lorn!'

Pus pes Innocentes wem slayn wythout blame. Thay wer also folowed yn hor same, þat ys to say, yn hor owne blod. Þat wer not folowet yn no font, but yn schedyn[g] of hor blod. Wherfor þe schull vndrystond þat foloyt comep prer haner o f hor blod: yn watyr, as we ben crystened yn þe fonte at þe chyrch; in chedyng blod, as þe childyr and mony þowsandyys of oþer martys þat schedden hor blod for Crystys loue; þe þryd fologht ys in fayth, yn þe wheche all þe patryarches, and propheþys, and all oþyr hoþy fadyrs þat wem befor Crystys yncarnacyon þat leuedyn yn Cristes comyng: þat wern folowed yn fologht of faythe.¹

Although medieval infant mortality may be very much a historical phenomenon for which there are no reliable statistics, with relatively few memorials to help us visualize its reality, infant death was clearly an important theme in medieval culture; probably the most often depicted and influential example was that of the Massacre of the Innocents at Bethlehem. Ordered by Herod after the Magi fail to return to him, the Massacre is described as follows in Matthew 2.16-18:

16 Then Herod perceiving that he was deluded by the wise men, was exceedingly angry; and sending killed all the men children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the borders thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.
17 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremias the prophet, saying:
18 A voice in Rama was heard, lamentation and great mourning; Rachel bewailing her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.

Although mentioned by only one of the evangelists, the Massacre was to be found in early Christian art from as early as the fourth century. In medieval art and literature it played an important role within the story of Christ's infancy as the reason for the Holy Family's flight into Egypt. The frequency with which the Massacre is discussed and depicted shows that the story clearly had great popular appeal, not only as an episode from Christ's early life but also for its emotional impact: the brutal death of innocent infants and their mothers' intense grief.

THE MASSACRE AS HISTORY

Whereas Matthew's account of the Massacre seems straightforward enough, when taken in combination with the other gospels as well as apocryphal traditions it left

¹ Mirk's homily 'De Innocentibus et Eorum Festiuitate' in Erbe (1905) 36.
room for confusion and interpretation. Thus, there were diverse chronologies in circulation about the events between the Nativity and the Flight, perhaps partly due to the age of two years stipulated by Herod for the targeted child victims at Bethlehem as this suggests a long time span between the Nativity, the visit by the Magi to the king and his subsequent realization that they would not return. With the feast of the Holy Innocents celebrated on 28 December, Epiphany on 6 January and Candlemas on 2 February (mentioned in Luke 2, and in accordance with the instruction in Leviticus 12 that mothers should be purified forty days after the birth of a son), many medieval authors felt that the chronology of events needed some clarification, and this section will offer some examples.

The correct order of events in Christ's infancy was important to medieval authors as well as to artists depicting its sequence, for example in wall-paintings. There was all the more room for confusion among authors and artists who did not just confine themselves to the main events but also included popular episodes like the Virgin's early life, Joseph's doubt, and the role of the midwives in the Nativity, as well as some of the apocryphal miracles during the Flight into Egypt. This does not mean that all main events were necessarily included for there can be great variation in the treatment of Christ's infancy. Chronological order was absolutely crucial in the medieval Nativity cycles, which aimed to present logical and complete versions of the events surrounding the birth of Christ. The confusion amongst authors about the correct chronology can be observed in the Middle-English plays of the Massacre and the Purification of the Virgin, where the order varies amongst the surviving cycles: for example, in the Towneley and Digby cycles the Massacre follows the Purification, in the N-Town cycle the Purification is combined with the Doctors in the Temple, while the Chester author chose to be evasive about the time involved and yet had the Massacre followed immediately by Herod's death, an event that would have taken place only several years later. The Purification in the York cycle is an incorrectly placed later insertion whereas, finally, the two surviving Coventry Corpus Christi plays condense Christ's infancy to an extreme: the Pageant of the Shearmen and Taylors shows the Annunciation up to the Flight combined with the Massacre, while the Weavers' Pageant comprises the Prophet Play, followed by the Purification and Christ's Disputation in the Temple.

2 The Massacre is sometimes omitted by artists depicting Christ's infancy, perhaps because it did not directly pertain to Christ himself. One blatant omission of the Massacre occurs in the Holkham Bible Picture Book of c. 1320-30 (BL Add. MS 47682), which otherwise covers Christ's infancy quite extensively. However, it also lacks an Adoration scene and seems to have a folio missing between f. 13-14, which may explain these apparent omissions; see the introduction in the facsimile edition by W O Hassall (ed.), The Holkham Bible Picture Book (London, 1954) 1.

3 See Rosemary Woolf, The English Mystery Plays (Berkeley/Los Angeles, 1972) 195ff, who discusses the variations between the different cycles and the ways in which authors tried to cope with the ambiguities.
One can understand how the chronological inclusion of the Purification interrupts the dramatic sequence of the Magi visiting Herod and his subsequent actions when they fail to return; therefore, according to Rosemary Woolf, 'the standard method of harmonising the two accounts was to assume some delay between the departure of the Kings and Herod's recognition that he had been deceived by them and consequent decision to order the Massacre'. Others preferred to follow the apocryphal accounts, e.g. the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, which has the Magi arriving not post-haste within a fortnight of the Nativity but rather some two years later after a long journey; by the time that the family is obliged to flee to Egypt, the Christ child is able to walk and tame the dragons they meet on their way. In art, too, one may find such variations for although the Christ child is usually an infant held in his mother's arms in depictions of the Flight into Egypt, in some one may find him as an older toddler old enough to be walking alongside Joseph. This is particularly the case in those expanded versions of the Flight where the Christ child performs miracles such as making a tree bend itself down to offer its fruit to the Virgin, as illustrated in the famous English Infancy manuscript of c. 1320-30 in the Bodleian Library (MS Selden Supra 38): whereas Christ is still only a swaddled infant in the scene of the Rest on the Flight on f. 5, he is suddenly turned into a tall young boy in the subsequent scenes up to the arrival in Egypt on f. 8, perhaps suggesting either a very long journey or a consciously made visual transformation as soon as his role becomes an active one.

The early fourteenth-century poem *Cursor Mundi*, describing the history of the world in 24,000 lines of rhyming couplets, describes the story of the Massacre before giving an account of the miraculous childhood of Christ. It relates how on the morning after the Adoration, the kings very properly 'tok þair leue at mari mild, / And thanked ioseph curtaiisli, / O þair calling and herbergeri' (ll. 11533-35), and follow the advice given to them by an angel in a dream that they should not return to Herod. The latter's fury is vividly described but there is no explanation given as to why he should specifically target children of 'tua yeir or less' (ll. 11566-67). In contrast, the number of murdered Innocents is explicitly stated:

\[
\text{It was a mikel sume o quain} \\
\text{O þaa childer þat war slain,} \\
\text{An hundret fourti-four thousand,} \\
\text{Thoru iesu com to lijf lastand.} \quad (\text{ll. 11577-80})
\]

4 Woolf (1972) 195.  
6 Richard Morris (ed.), *Cursor Mundi (The cursor of the world): A Northumbrian Poem of the XIVth Century in Four Versions, Two of them Midland*, part 2, EETS, os. 59 (London, 1875); the lines quoted here are from this edition, version BL Cotton MS Vesp. A iii.
One line suffices to describe the human sorrow: 'Ful waful made he mani wijf!' (l. 11564) - clearly, the death of infants was believed to affect mothers in particular. Fortunately, 'seuen dais for-wit we rede / Ar herod had gert do pis dede' (ll. 11581-82), an angel warns Joseph of the forthcoming Massacre, which leaves them just enough time to make their escape to Egypt.

Medieval chroniclers and historians were aware of the problems of chronology within the infancy of Christ and often tried to find a solution. Ranulf Higden stated his ideas about the order of events from the Nativity quite explicitly in his *Polychronicon*, which in its original version covered the period from the Creation to c. 1342. Several decades later, John Trevisa translated this as follows in his English version of the *Polychronicon* (completed 1387):

Pan in þe ende of þe sevengere of Augustus, þe Saturday [at] niȝt þat [þanne] folwed þe day, þe fourteþere of þe age of Marye, þe sevenþe day to fore Ianyver, Criste was i-bore at Bethleem, and þanne the eyþere day afterward he was circumeïced in a Sonday. Þe twelfþe day after þe burþe was the Epiphanye, and fel in a Friday, þe sixte day of Ianyver; þo come þe kynges in worschippyng þe Crist. And after þat fourty dayes of þe nativity, in a Þorsday, þe secounde day of Feverer, Criste was presented in þe temple; in mynde þerof is þe feste of Candelmasse day. After þat by warnynge of þe aungel, þat warned Ioseph [in] his sleep, he flye in to Egipt wþ iþe moder and Ioseph, and was þere sixe þere anone to Herodes his deth. Herodes caste forto sele al þe children by cause of Crist, for he wolde be siker [of hym] among oþere.8

Here the Adoration of the Magi and Purification of the Virgin are said to agree with the traditional dates of Epiphany and Candlemas, followed by the Flight into Egypt at an unspecified time and a six-year sojourn there. Higden followed his account by a careful calculation of dates from the time of Christ's conception, 'ab octavo kalendas Aprilis' or 'dies ducenti lxxvi' before the Nativity, and an extensive discussion of the ambiguities between various authors' accounts of Christ's life due to the different traditions of starting the new year. The second chapter of book iv includes Herod's problems with his sons and the actual description of the Massacre. While concentrating on defending himself in Rome against his sons' accusations, Herod does find the time to burn all the ships at Tharsus because the Magi took sail there rather than return to him. The time lapse between the visit of the Magi and the Massacre is clearly explained by Herod's visit to Rome; it is only

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after having settled his family affairs that he is again ready to take action against Christ as a remaining threat to his power. In Trevisa's version this episode reads:

Pe mene tyme pe pre kynges come to Ierusalem, and come nouȝt aȝen to Herodes by pe same wey; Herodes trowede Þat they were begyled, and torned aȝen aschamed. Perefore he wijdrowe his wyll, and souȝt nouȝt pe childe forto doo hym to deth. [...] Panne after a sere and somewhat more of dayes after pe burȝe of Crist he come from Rome, and was acordeþe wiþ his sones, and þerefore he was þe boldere, and hilde hym þe more siker of þe kyngdom, and slowþ alle þe children of Bethlem above þe age of Crist, þat he woste was þo twelve monþe olde, anon to two sere olde and wiþ ynne; þat is to menyngþ from þe children of two sere olde to þe children of oon nyþe olde, among þe whiche oon of his owne children was i-slawe at was happeliche i-take to norisshynge. But Methodius seip þat þat was i-doo by Goddes owne dome and his ordinaunce, for he þat hadde byrefte so meny men here children schulde be byrefte of his owne children also.10

The number of Innocents slain is not mentioned and the account of the Massacre quite factual. However, the death of one of his own infant sons in the atrocity clearly did not teach Herod a lesson for later in the same chapter we read that he fell back upon similar measures to make his own death more memorable: 'and forto make þe Iewes make sorwe for his deth, wheþer þey wolde oþer noo, he heet in his deyenge slee alle þe noble men children of þe Iewerie'.11 The story of his ordering another such a slaughter of male Jewish children to make his own demise more memorable here serves to make Herod into an archetypal cruel despot; child murder is always an emotive subject that had already been exploited to great effect by writers from Antiquity. We shall again find the tradition of Herod's own son being slain amongst the Innocents in the Massacre in both medieval drama and art.

One influential source not mentioned yet is the Legenda Aurea, a compilation of then current hagiographical stories written in Latin around 1275 by the Dominican Jacobus de Voragine, later archbishop of Genoa (c. 1228-1298). His version of the history of the Holy Innocents opens with a triple explanation of why these martyrs are called innocents: 'Innocentes dicti sunt triplici ratione, scilicet ratione vitae, ratione poenae et ratione innocentiae assecutae'.12 This is followed by the family history of Herod Ascalonita, his journey to Rome to defend himself before the emperor, his command upon his return to slaughter all male children in

11 Lumby (1964) vol. IV, book iv, cap. II, 289. However, in other medieval histories these are not always children but rather Jewish nobles; compare also the Holkham Bible Picture Book, f. 17, in Hassall (1954).
12 Graesse (1965) cap. 10, 62. William Caxton's version (1498) f. 58, runs as follows: 'The Innocentes ben called Innocentes for .iij. reasons. Fyrst by cause & reason of lyf / and by reason of payne: and by reason of Innocence. By reason of lyfe they ben sayd Innocentes by cause they had an Innocent lyf they greued noo body: nether god by Inobedience / ne theyr neyghbourys by vntruth ne by coneyuynghe of one synne'.
4. THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS

Bethlehem under the age of two, and the story of his own miserable end. The reason given by Voragine for Herod's decision to target children under the age of two is quite an interesting attempt to interpret the story logically: apparently, the king was aware of the lapse of a year since the visit of the Magi but worried that someone as powerful as Jesus might make himself younger than he really was, and therefore even children but one night old were to be included in the Massacre.

The subsequent French translation of Voragine's *Legenda Aurea* was in its turn translated into English in the first half of the fifteenth century, yet Caxton chose to write his own English translation from the French with more material from the Latin and previous English versions incorporated in it; his version of *The Golden Legend* was printed in 1483. One section that was omitted by Caxton was Voragine's inclusion of an alternative but less likely interpretation of the Innocents' ages as ranging from two to five years, which he attributed to St (John) Chrysostom, bishop, doctor and author of homilies (c. 347-407). In this version, the star appeared to the Magi for one year prior to the Nativity and Herod, once he had returned from his one-year visit to Rome, believed that Christ had actually been born at the time of the star's first appearance two years earlier: he therefore would have ordered the Massacre of children up to five, but no younger than two years old. Although Voragine expressed his doubts about this version of events, he did recognize one advantage in that this explained why some Holy Innocent relics appeared so much larger than the bones of any normal child below the age of two; but then, he added, it was possible that people in those days were taller than their medieval counterparts.

THE CULT OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS

According to the fourteenth-century chronicle poem *Cursor Mundi*, the number of massacred Innocents amounted to 144,000 - an unrealistic yet highly symbolic number, of course, and one that would allow for huge quantity of relics; the number was current in Byzantine liturgical tradition, based on that of the elect in the

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14 Graesse (1965) 65: 'Cui assertioni fidem facere videtur, quod quaedam ossa innocentium habentur adeo grandia, quam bimorum esse non possunt. Potest tamen dici, quod longe majoris erant tunc homines quantitatis, quam modo.' Jeremy (1946) 216, who observed that the whole chapter on the Holy Innocents is missing from the Harleian 4775 English translation, confined himself to the remark that Voragine's observations on the bones of the Innocents is missing both in the French and in Caxton's versions.
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Apocalypse. It is, however, rather difficult to find medieval church dedications to the Holy Innocents - the only example in Leicestershire dates from 1526 - or mention of their relics. Réau mentioned that the cult spread from Palestine, where the basilica at Bethlehem contained a chapel dedicated to them, to the west when St John Cassian brought some of their relics to the abbey of Saint-Victor at Marseilles in 414; the capitular chapel of Saint-Caprais at Agen was dedicated to the Innocents in the twelfth century.

As regards their remains, it is interesting that Voragine professed himself puzzled at the size of some of the relics, for the tiny bones of children under the age of two are extremely fragile and very much subject to decay; archaeologists excavating cemeteries nowadays often have trouble retrieving or recognizing infant remains. The skull of a neonate consists, in fact, of disconnected plates which are held together at the fontanelles (soft spots) by tough membranes that cover the openings; the last of these fontanelles close up when the infant is between twelve and eighteen months old. If infant skulls are dug up before the membranes have decayed, they would dry and harden, and thus hold the skull together. The skull of a child aged between eighteen and twenty-four months will hold together even after a long period of burial whereas the skulls of younger infants are usually only found in a fragments, for they inevitably fall apart once they are no longer held together by living tissue. As such fragments would hardly make impressive relics, it may well have been deliberate practice in some places to choose instead the bones of older children for relics, which could help to explain Voragine's enigma, although Chaucer's Pardoner should make one wary of the nature of medieval relics in any case. Nonetheless, Voragine's remarks suggest that relics of the Innocents must once have been common and, indeed, in the early fourteenth century the Flemish author Jan van Boendale mentioned in his epic *Brabantsche Yeesten* how twenty of king Pippin's warriors were once brought back to life through the relics of three Holy Innocents. One famous example of such a relic was once to be found in the church of the Franciscan cemetery of the Holy Innocents in Paris, which boasted 'a whole Innocent' encased in a crystal shrine and presented to the church by king Louis XI (1423-83); in the light of the above, one wonders how 'whole' and how

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16 This is the parish church of Thurnby, according to the TASC (Trans-national Atlas of Saints' Cults) project for Leicestershire conducted by Dr Graham Jones (Department of English Local History, University of Leicester).
18 This anatomical information and its archaeological aspects are based on discussions with Dr Jenny Wakely of the Department of Pre-Clinical Sciences, University of Leicester, who collaborates with the School of Archaeological Studies in researching human remains from archaeological excavations of cemeteries.
large this Innocent would have been.\textsuperscript{20} In 1433 a pilgrim recorded another such 'whole' Innocent at Cologne, encased in gold and silver: 'Te guldinen domme te Coelne [...] Item een gheheel Innocent in goude ende selver besleghen'.\textsuperscript{21} Yet these examples are relatively rare. Could it be that their potentially huge numbers made them appear less attractive or effective in the medieval imagination, or was there another reason, their potentially inexhaustible supply or the infant status of the nameless Innocents perhaps making them seem less efficacious as relics? The medieval abhorrence of child murder certainly found an outlet in the popular cult of a wide range of other supposed child-martyrs even though some of these were founded on extremely dubious accounts.

Although the reliquary evidence is scant, a few surviving objects give some idea of the veneration of the Innocents. A Limoges enamel reliquary from around 1210-20 in Lucerne shows by its main martyrdom scene that it must have been designed to contain relics of one or more Innocents.\textsuperscript{22} The narrative panel of the little coffer shows Herod with his sceptre seated on the far left and two mothers with gestures of despair standing on the far right while in between a soldier with a raised sword approaches a low cradle; the swaddled object inside is a veritable cocoon without any face showing. Interestingly, the authors of the catalogue identified this as a scene of Solomon's Judgement without considering how that particular event could relate to any relics; this type of iconographical confusion is not unique, as we shall see.\textsuperscript{23} The collection of the St Peter Hungate Museum in Norwich contains a stone mould, probably dating from 1245-57, which shows a Massacre in delicate relief, suggesting that it was once used to cast precious metal; the resulting cast could have adorned a saint's shrine in a local church or, more likely, the cathedral.\textsuperscript{24} Unfortunately, saints' shrines in England were dismantled if not completely destroyed under Henry VIII and the archaeological discovery of this mould now lacks its context; although it would seem an obvious decoration for a shrine of the Holy Innocents, in Norwich it might also have been considered a suitable subject for the casket of the local child martyr St William (d. 1144).\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{21} Van den Eerenbeemt (1935) 289.
\textsuperscript{23} The compilers of the Princeton Index of Christian Art instead chose to include this image under the heading of the Massacre of the Holy Innocents.
\textsuperscript{24} Jonathan Alexander and Paul Binski (eds), \textit{The Age of Chivalry: Art in Plantagenet England 1200-1400} (London, 1987) cat. 447; the mould measures 15.3 x 14 x 4 cm.
\textsuperscript{25} Alexander and Binski (1987) cat. 447. Edward Meyrick Goulburn and Henry Symonds, \textit{The Ancient Sculptures in the Roof of Norwich Cathedral} (London, 1876) 101, mention in this context the example of another reputed child-martyr, Richard of Pontoise, who in 1182 was also
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However, a small bone cradle found in a cemetery in France and described in the exhibition *L'enfance au Moyen Age* as a thirteenth or fourteenth-century 'berceau-reliquaire' may indicate a lack of more convincing reliquary remains of the Holy Innocents.26

Other evidence of devotion to the cult of the Holy Innocents can be found in medieval literature from as early as the Anglo-Saxon period. Ælfric's homily on the Nativity of the Innocents, written in Old English while he was a monk at Cerne Abbas in Dorset, is the fifth in his first volume of forty homilies issued in 991 and survives in a number of manuscripts including the oldest version, BL Royal MS 7 C. xii (A) of the late tenth century.27 Ælfric's text offers a good insight into the early teaching about the status of the Innocents as the earliest Christian martyrs. The story given resembles the accounts in later chronicles: on the twelfth day of the Nativity, the Magi visit Herod who interrogates them and orders them to come back to him after their visit to the newborn king, but an angel warns the Magi not to return, while Herod himself is summoned to Rome and only able to order the Massacre after his return a year later. Ælfric seems almost apologetic on Christ's behalf for having allowed the Innocents to be massacred in his stead and he clearly felt obliged to point out that Christ was quite willing to suffer death but not this soon for 'gif he ða on cildcradole acweald wurde, swilce bonne his tocyme mancynne bediglod wære'.28 The reference to the 'cildcradole' is interesting as an early example of the cradle typifying the infant. Ælfric continued his homily with praise for the Innocents as 'Hælendes gewitan', or witnesses of the Saviour even when they did not yet know him, and explained what happened to them: 'Hi wurdon gegripene fram moderlicum breostum, ac hi wurdon betaehte þærrihte engelicum bosmum'.29 According to Ælfric, the Bethlehem mothers should share supposedly crucified by Jews: 'The body was removed to the Church of the Holy Innocents in Paris, and there enclosed in a shrine, where it was the means of working many miracles. His head, we are told, was still to be seen there at the commencement of the French Revolution.'26 'Petit catalogue' to the exhibition at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris (1994-95), nr. 112: 'Berceau-reliquaire, Usse-Rigny, Unité 9966 du CNRS, XIIIe-XIVe siècle. Au Moyen Âge, des berceaux-reliquaires abritaient les reliques des saints Innocents, fêtés au temps de Noël. Il en existe de somptueux comme de très modestes. Celui-ci, en os, fut trouvé dans l'enclos d'un cimetière.' The author(s) seem to have misunderstood the nature of the Christmas cradle or jésueau; see chapter 3. In any case, this particular bone cradle could just as well be a miniature toy; it was not included in Richd and Alexandre-Bidon (1994).


28 Transl.: If he had been killed then in the cradle, then his coming would have been concealed from mankind.

29 Transl.: They were snatched from their mothers' breasts, but they were straightaway entrusted to the bosoms of angels. In Christian thought the Innocents were often regarded as protomartyrs with the following distinction made in medieval homilies between the types of martyrs: the type of *martyr actu et voluntate* like St Stephen; *martyr voluntate sine actu* such as St John the Evangelist; and *martyres actu sine voluntate*, of which the Holy Innocents are an example. I am grateful to Zdenek Uhlir (Department of Manuscripts, National Library of the Czech Republic, Prague) for this information.
equally in their children's salvation for 'witudlice ða moddru on heora cildra martyrdome þrowodon; þæt swurd ðe ðæra cildra lima þurharn becom to ðæra moddra heortan'.\(^{30}\) Incidentally, the sword is here presented as the archetypal murder weapon in the Massacre. Most important, however, is Ælfric’s belief that the Innocents, murdered in early infancy, would attain their full life-span in Heaven, in accordance with the medieval tenet that at the Resurrection everyone will adopt the age of Christ, \textit{viz.} the age of maturity and physical perfection at around thirty:\(^{31}\)

\begin{quote}
Hi wæron gehwæde and ungewittige acwealde, ac hi arisað on þam gemænelicum dome mid fullum wæastme and heofenlicere snoternysse.
Ealle we cumað to anre ylde on ram gemænelicum æriste, þæað ðe we nu on myslicere ylde of þyssere worulde gewiton.\(^{32}\)
\end{quote}

Ælfric concluded his homily with a final reminder of the heavenly status achieved by the Innocents through their martyrdom: they follow Christ wherever he goes and stand before the throne of God carrying their martyrs' palm branches, dressed in white robes and 'butan ælære gewemmednyssæ', innocent without any defilement.\(^{33}\) In view of this, it seems likely that the two beardless, nimbed and robed figures on the sides of the Lucerne casket represent the Innocents in Heaven.

It was at the feast of the Innocents on 28 December that the ceremony was held of the boy-bishop, who was traditionally elected on 6 December in memory of St Nicholas of Myra, himself a precocious infant in his time; although frowned upon by the church authorities, the institution of the boy-bishops survived in many areas in England until the sixteenth century and even longer on the Continent.\(^{34}\) The Massacre of the Innocents itself was to be commemorated with even greater impact in liturgical drama and later in the medieval mystery plays, as will be discussed below, but occasionally it inspired other writers. Some time after 1426, 

\(^{30}\) Transl.: Truly, the mothers suffered martyrdom in their children; that sword which pierced their children's limbs [also] reached those mothers' hearts.

\(^{31}\) See chapter 2; also Meg Twycross in Phillips (1990) 271-86.

\(^{32}\) Transl.: They were killed while young and unreasoning, but they shall arise on the common Judgement Day fully grown and with heavenly wisdom. We shall all come to one age in that common resurrection, although we now may depart this world in a variety of ages.


John Audelay wrote his poem *In die sanctorum Innocencium*, which deserves quoting in full for its emotional and theological treatment of the subject:

With al þe rever(e)nþ pat we may,  
Worship we Childermasday.

Crist crid in cradil, 'moder baba;'  
Þe childer of Iral cridyn, 'wa wa,'  
Fore here merþ hit was aga,  
When Erod fersly cowþ hem fray.

Pe crisum-childer to Crist con cry,  
'We beþ slayne fore gret enuy;  
Lord, venge our blod fore þi mercy,  
And take our souls to þe we pray.'

Al knaue-childer with iþere  
Of age, in Bedlem fere or nere,  
Pai chedyn here blod with swerd and spere,  
Alas þer was a refulw aray.

An heuenle voys answerd a3ayn,  
'Abyd awyle and sofer  
Hent þe nowmbir be e-slayn  
Of 3our breder, as I 3ou say.

An hunderd and fourte þousand þer were;  
Crist ham cristynd al in-fere,  
In þor blod, and were martere,  
Al clene vergyns hit is no nay.

Fore 3e han sofird marterdom  
For Cristis sake, al and sum,  
He wil 3oue crowne in his kyngdam,  
And folou þe lomb in ioy for ay.'

By limiting the numbers to 'an hunderd and fourte þousand' Audelay is only slightly more cautious than the established tradition quoted by the *Cursor Mundi* poet, but his description of the sword and spear as the murder weapons is quite conventional. Here, too, the Innocents will be rewarded in Heaven with a crown and the privilege of following the Lamb forever. More striking, however, is his use of baby language to typefy both Christ in his cradle and the Innocents; the latters' classification as 'crisum-childer' here carries the more general meaning of infants, although the allusion to the baptismal chrysom cloth emphasizes their innocence. As we shall see, the Innocents' appeal to Christ is an echo of their voices in the much earlier Latin liturgical drama.

While religious literature about the Innocents is one aspect of their importance, the true extent of medieval feeling about the horror of the Massacre may be better gauged from superstitions surrounding it; for example, their feast of Childermas on 28 December was considered a highly unpropitious day. In the fifteenth century, this superstition confined itself not just the feast itself but to every subsequent day of the week on which Childermas fell, the whole year through; on this weekly black-letter day, which was itself also referred to as Childermas or Innocents' Day, people would avoid starting on a new task or on a journey, or even refuse to engage in battle. Louis XI, donor of the relic of 'a whole Innocent' to the church of the Innocents in Paris, was particularly scrupulous in observing this

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35 Ella Keats Whiting (ed.), *The Poems of John Audelay*, EETS, o.s. 184 (London, 1931) no. 36.
custom, while René of Lorraine is recorded as having had to forego battle on 17 October 1476 because his lansquenets refused to fight the enemy 'on Innocents' Day' - not Childermas itself but merely the same weekday.36 This same tradition was also very much alive in England for on 21 June 1461 James Gresham wrote to John Paston that the coronation of Edward IV was to be postponed from Sunday 28 to Monday 29 June 'for cause Childermesse day fal on the Sunday, the Coronacion shall on the Moneday, &c.;' apparently, the coronation did in fact take place on Sunday after all but the processions and pageantry were deferred until Monday.37 Audelay also exhorted his readers to honour 'Childermasday' although he obviously referred to their actual feastday on 28 December. Incidentally, the observation of Childermas throughout the year remained popular long after the medieval period for the OED has a reference as late as 1745 to Swift's statement that 'Friday and Childermas are two cross days in the week, and it is impossible to have good luck on either of them'.

The Massacre in Medieval Art
Possibly the earliest surviving example of the Massacre of the Innocents in art can be found on the 'Lot sarcophagus', which was discovered during excavation south of the St. Sebastian basilica in Rome in 1949-50; dated before the middle of the fourth century and still showing traces of polychromy, it has been identified as showing a Massacre scene in one badly worn panel on the lower right side.38 The theme can also be found in the mosaic of 432-40 at Sta Maria Maggiore in Rome and on a fifth-century sarcophagus at St Maximin in Trier.39 It became more popular in the following centuries, first decorating especially smaller objects such as ivory reliefs, caskets and diptychs, an early example of which is a panel from an early fifth-century ivory diptych now in Berlin; it subsequently appeared in manuscripts and windows as well as on walls and doorways, thereby attesting to its universal appeal.40 It was even used to decorate other items: for example, half of one side of an English romanesque ivory comb, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and dating possibly from the third decade of the twelfth century, shows the Massacre as part of the Infancy of Christ.41 While Herod sits

40 Early medieval appearances of the theme are discussed with many examples in Forsyth (1976) 34-35 and n. 11; also McLaughlin in deMause (1980) 133-34 and n. 207.
enthroned in the top left corner, two soldiers armed with swords are busy snatching
two naked infants from their mothers' arms. Meanwhile, one prostrate mother
reaches out to another naked child, presumably already dead like the two other
naked infant corpses in the main scene, while the bottom corner of the comb
presents an interesting detail of two mothers still suckling their naked children. As
one might expect, all children are disproportionately large and tall, yet the carving
leaves no room for doubt as to what is going on, even within its small scale; the
overall size of the comb is 112 x 90 mm.

Visual depictions of the event are seldom noted for their subtlety but rather
present the scene with brutal clarity. From the earliest depictions on, the Innocents
are usually naked, albeit not always anatomically convincing as infants; they are
frequently huge in dimension and, in fact, often closely resemble the sprawling
disproportionate figures in the types of medieval foetus diagrams discussed earlier.
Their nudity rather than their size or proportions characterizes them as infants; their
dimensions are frequently a device which enabled artists to illustrate in detail the
injuries inflicted on the Innocents' bodies. Notwithstanding their usual naked state,
the children's gender is rarely shown explicitly before the fifteenth century; the
surviving detail of an unmistakably large penis on the outlined body of one
Innocent in a Massacre wall-painting of c. 1325-30 at Chalgrove (Oxfordshire) is
rather an exception in this period. Of course, there is enormous variation in the
manner in which the Innocents were depicted, not just through time and regions but
also depending on an individual artist's talent, although it is only true to say that in
general the appearance - if not necessarily size - of the Innocents becomes more
consistently baby-like in the course of the fifteenth century. However large and
awkward some of them may seem from a modern point of view, the Innocents in
medieval art epitomize infantile helplessness; occasionally, one of them may be
seen stretching out a hand in a hopeless gesture of appeal but they have no other
means of defence - none but their mothers' protection.

Even though Matthew does not mention the actual manner in which the
Innocents were slaughtered by Herod's soldiers, two types of execution emerged in
early Christian art, the earliest known being that of the Innocents being held by the
feet and brutally dashed to the ground by the soldiers in the way it appears on the
Lot sarcophagus in Rome as well as on the ivory diptych in Berlin and on a
This type has a long history, being based on the war topos of children of
conquered enemies being dashed to the ground by victors, which is known not
only from the fate of the Trojan children after the fall of the city but also from the
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Old Testament and occasionally from other hagiographical accounts. In the second type, which developed in the East and was to become the most wide-spread and best-known version, the soldiers actually use swords to kill the infants; although in later examples one also finds the soldiers using spears, occasionally daggers or very short swords, and sometimes even types of scimitars for a more exotic flavour, it is the sword which was the Massacre weapon par excellence. As such, the sword was to become by the late fifteenth century the attribute of the Sibylla Europaea who was supposed to have prophesied the Flight into Egypt as necessitated by the Massacre. In this new type the Innocents are shown stabbed, decapitated, dismembered or impaled on swords and spears, in many cases with liberal applications of red pigment. In some cases, there still appears to linger a memory of the older type with soldiers grabbing an Innocent by the limbs or swinging him high before dispatching him with a sword or dagger; one may observe this in a Bible picture-leaf of the mid twelfth century (BL MS 37473, recto), which shows in the eleventh of twelve scenes related to the Nativity how one of three soldiers is swinging a naked infant by the leg while holding another by the arm to enable his colleague to stab it with his sword. Herod is often included, seated on a throne while issuing his command, which his soldiers appear to carry out with great gusto; frequently the Innocents' corpses appear to be cruelly mutilated, with severed heads and limbs strewn across the scene. In this context, it is interesting to quote a literary parallel from Priester Wernher's Maria. Diu drie liet von der maget, written probably in Augsburg in 1172, where the third song conveys the horror quite graphically:

Diu kint ungewahsen;
diu hobet sie abeslugen
bein vnd arme genugen
vnd rigen siv und div wafen
div bi den ammen slafen

42 See the discussion of this type by Kötsche-Breitenbruch (1968-69); also A D McDonald, 'The Iconographic Tradition of Sedulius', Speculum 8 (1933) 150-56 for a discussion of an early poetic description of the smashing to death of the Innocents in Sedulius' Carmen Paschale (dated before 431).
43 For the Sibylla Europaea with her sword as a symbol of the Massacre, see Heitz (1903); Timmers (1947) 2.vi; Réau (1956) vol. II, part 1, 420-30; LCI, vol. 4, 153; De Clercq (1981) 87-116.
44 Illustrated in A Caiger-Smith, English Medieval Mural Paintings (Oxford, 1963) pl. XlB.
45 Quoted thus by Ursula Gray, Das Bild des Kindes im Spiegel der altdutschen Dichtung und Literatur (Frankfurt am Main, 1974) 21-22. I am grateful to Mr Tobias A Kemper, who is writing a thesis at the University of Bon on late-medieval German texts on Christ's passion, for additional information and for his help with the difficult translation. Transl.: They [Herod's soldiers] struck off the heads of the small children as well as the legs and arms of them who should be sleeping at their wetnurses' breasts. O woe, what crying and what moaning when the children lay around, their feet and hands everywhere. O woe! whey they killed them and when they cut off their life's breath, when the children's blood poured down into the laps of those who were left tormented.
scholten an ir brusten.
owi welh vvfen, welh chlagen,
da div kint waren in der not
da si lagen allen ende,
hie die fuze, dort die hende!
owe da man sie hin zuchte
vnd in daz leben abdruckte
da der kinde blut nidergoz
den uerkolten in die schoz.

An unusual version of the Massacre can be observed in the scene illuminated below the Flight into Egypt on f. 14 of the Winchester Psalter (BL MS Cotton Nero C IV), produced around 1150 for Henry of Blois: Herod on his throne is flanked by two soldiers in armour, one of whom looks out towards the reader while running his sword through the body of a naked infant he is holding by the right arm. The dismembered remains of at least four more Innocents are strewn around the scene; two mothers stand on the far right, apparently dumbstruck at the horrific sight. The most striking figure is, however, a grotesque, almost theatrical figure in the centre devouring the naked corpse of a child he has just transfixed with his sword. This huge figure greatly adds to the sense of immense horror and barbarity while also contributing to the image of his employer Herod as a depraved tyrant. The Winchester Psalter illumination is a good example of how the image of Herod began to change for the worse in twelfth-century art after having been presented as a powerful and majestic ruler in early Christian art. An evil counsellor or even the devil himself can sometimes be observed behind the enthroned Herod as one finds in art from the twelfth century on, e.g. on the carved twelfth-century St Michael portal on the north side of Poitiers Cathedral. In the Middle-English poem *Pe Deuelis Perlament*, which occurs in the early fifteenth-century Lambeth MS 853 and in a later printed edition by Wynkyn de Worde, the devil himself claims to have advised the Massacre:

\[\text{Panne y councellid eround with-inne a while} \]
\[\text{To distroie } \text{pe former prophesie}, \]
\[\text{Pat alle men children in towne & pile} \]
\[\text{to slee } \text{jem, pat ihesus myght with hem die. (I. 137-40)} \]

Artists continued to add to this image of Herod as a wicked despot not just by showing devils whispering into the king's ear but also by giving him fierce

47 Miriam Anne Skey, 'The Iconography of Herod the Great in Medieval Art', *EDAM Newsletter* 3 (1980) 4-10.
49 Furnivall (1895).
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grimaces and an ugly complexion. Amidst the carnage, which is often enacted before his very throne, Herod's raised sword - symbol of royal power - assumes an ominous character. Apparently, it was in fifteenth-century England that Herod received the worst treatment from artists and dramatists alike, who not only gave him a special demon-crown but also presented him as actively participating in the slaughter in some instances.50

Sometimes the Massacre served merely as a background to the Holy Family's Flight into Egypt but it was often treated as a theme in its own right, even extensively so. Thus one may find the theme split up into separate stages of the event: Herod on his throne giving the order to his soldiers, the Massacre itself, sometimes the soldiers' return to Herod afterwards, and occasionally also Herod's death as a fitting finale. In some examples of the Massacre in medieval art only part of the scene has been preserved, as in two late twelfth-century voussoirs from St Mary's Abbey, York, and in a thirteenth-century wall-painting at Wiston (Suffolk); only the scene of Herod issuing his command to the soldiers survives in the York voussoir and the wall-painting also shows just the enthroned Herod, but their context is still clear.51 In the Queen Mary Psalter (BL MS Royal 2 B VII), datable to c. 1310-20, one Massacre sequence is split across the two lower borders with Herod giving the order shown in the bottom margin of f. 235v and the actual Massacre on f. 236; the latter consists only of one mother lying helpless on the ground while two soldiers in armour pierce the naked bodies of two tall Innocents with their swords.52 The mothers are not always present in depictions of the actual Massacre, which may be confined to Herod seated on his throne watching how his soldiers carry out the butchery before his very eyes, rather as it would be acted out on stage: sometimes, this is due to constrictions of space as in a manuscript initial attributed to the illuminator Pierre Remiet in a late fourteenth or early fifteenth-century breviary (Paris, BN ms. lat. 1024, f. 29), which shows Herod enthroned and only one murderous soldier trampling the bodies of two swaddled infants, but without any mothers present.53 Similarly, Herod, one soldier with a sword, two naked and two swaddled infants have been squeezed together in another initial on f.

52 See Warner (1912) 241; the second Massacre scene in this psalter will be discussed below.
69v of a late fourteenth-century French book of hours in the Barber Institute's collection at Birmingham.54

It is usually the Innocents as helpless victims who take centre stage, their nudity the traditional way of presenting innocent *infantes* but here also stressing their physical vulnerability. Although the swaddled cocoon was often used by artists as a recognizable icon in other contexts, it does not have the same visual and emotional impact as the image of naked infant bodies transfixed or hacked to pieces by armed soldiers. There are, nevertheless, Massacre scenes in which medieval artists chose to present at least some of the Innocents as swaddled, one being the initial in 'Remiet's' breviary mentioned earlier. At Reims Cathedral one may find a swaddled infant held by one of the mothers amongst the sculptures high on the west wall inside the nave on the left of the central portal, dating from c. 1260-70, whereas an earlier example of c. 1225-30 can be seen amongst the quatrefoil reliefs on the socle of the left jamb flanking the south portal on the west front of Amiens Cathedral.55 In the case of the breviary initial, one can understand that the illuminator perhaps chose the image of the swaddled infant as a kind of artistic shorthand to bring the story across to his reader in quite a limited space. However, swaddled infants are relatively rare and, when depicted, it is often in combination with the more usual naked children, which suggests that artists intended something different: either to give the event a more contemporary flavour by including the familiar icon of a swaddled child, or to indicate the age range from one night to two years described in the written accounts. This could be what the Amiens quatrefoil is illustrating for the remains of one butchered Innocent are shown as conventionally naked while the mother in the centre is trying to protect a swaddled infant; however, a third child standing on the far right tugging her cloak is dressed in a tunic and appears to be older, therefore presumably exempt from the same fate. In the *Très Belles Heures* (BN ms. nouv. acq. lat. 3093), begun in the early years of the fifteenth century for the Due de Berry, the Massacre scene in the lower margin of p. 62 includes two swaddled infants amongst the five Innocents.56

Of course, the Massacre was bound to prove popular in medieval art as part of the infancy of Christ, and artists all over Europe depicted it in different media, not just in manuscript illuminations for the elite but also in public art from sculpture to stained glass and wall-painting. An early and quite extensive cycle can be found in Cologne where the church St Maria im Kapitol boasts a unique double door with

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54 Hours according to the use of Metz, inv. no. 59.11; I am grateful to Ms Philippa Bassett, Archivist (Special Collections), for supplying me with further information on this manuscript.
55 See Williamson (1995) pl. 237 and 141-44, pl. 216, respectively.
sculpted wooden panels of c. 1049; of the twenty-eight panels showing scenes from the life of Christ, four show Herod with the kings, with the messenger announcing their deceit, with his scribes, with his soldiers, and a fifth finally the Massacre itself, suggesting the influence of liturgical drama. Another early sculpted example in England is the now badly eroded, twelfth-century font at Ingleton in Yorkshire, where, in between the Adoration and the Flight, a Massacre scene is shown with Herod holding a sword and a single soldier holding an infant by its feet before killing it with an axe; the remains of several infants are shown but there are no mothers present. M D Anderson, who claimed that 'this subject was rare in early Christian art', mentioned its inclusion on the early thirteenth-century carved doorway of the Lady Chapel at Glastonbury Abbey. Amongst later sculpted examples can be listed several bosses in the stone vaulting of Norwich Cathedral, which include three bosses in the eighth bay of the nave, showing Herod flanked by two soldiers in armour with swords on the central boss and two actual Massacre scenes on either side. Herod's pose on the central boss is an interesting one: although standing, he still has his right leg crossed over his left. The two slightly smaller Massacre bosses show one soldier in armour each: the one on the south side holds a naked infant by one leg while piercing its body with his sword whereas the soldier on the north side is facing the mother of his naked victim. Perhaps the original polychromy of both bosses matched the splashes of red blood in their present colour-scheme. In addition, the bosses installed in the fourth bay of the north transept vault after the fire in 1509 range from the Massacre itself and Herod's death to the Innocents' souls being received in Heaven; the latter is an exceptional theme in art although it was quite current in literature as well as in liturgical drama, as will be discussed below. In fact, the bosses at Norwich Cathedral, and particularly those in the nave portraying Herod, have been studied in

57 Wolfgang Stracke, *St. Maria im Kapitol Köln: Die romanische Bildertür* (Cologne, 1994). The double door, which measures 485 x 250 cm altogether, contains eight double and twenty single panels showing scenes from the Annunciation to Pentecost; the door was originally designed to serve the north entrance to the church, which is one of the earliest in Cologne and belonged to the oldest and most prestigious nunnery in the diocese. The accompanying texts of the first four panels read: 'REX IUBET HII PERGUNT', 'REX DERIDETUR', 'SIBI VERUM SCRIBA FATETUR', 'PRECIPIT INSONTES PUFEROS'. The fifth panel, which shows a Rachel-like mother seated in the centre while trying to hide her child in her mantle, has sadly lost its inscription.


60 See Goulburn and Symonds (1876) 227ff and plates; Goulburn only discusses the bosses in the nave, which date from after the 1463 fire.

connection with the lost Norwich Corpus Christi cycle;\textsuperscript{62} the question, as in all such comparisons between art and drama, is whether one influenced the other or whether they are all part of a long-familiar theme.

In stained-glass windows in France and Germany the Massacre was often depicted as part of cycles of the life of the Virgin or of Christ's infancy, perhaps most famously in three scenes of c. 1144-55 at Chartres Cathedral but also at the cathedral of Evreux around 1270, and at the cathedrals of Tours and Lyons.\textsuperscript{63} In Germany the Massacre can be seen in the stained-glass cycle of the life of the Virgin of c. 1350 in the cathedral of Regensburg, where the first of three soldiers in armour transfixes a screaming naked infant with his sword right in front of Herod; the impaled head of another Innocent is presented on top of a spear.\textsuperscript{64} A particular interest in the theme of infancy is evident at Esslingen (Schwabia), where two churches feature the Massacre in their windows.\textsuperscript{65} The earliest is that of the St Dionys Stadtpfarrkirche, c. 1300, which depicts the Massacre in two quatrefoils, one with Herod watching an infant about to be stabbed and the other showing a kneeling mother trying to stop a second soldier from plunging his sword into the body of her son; the swords are horribly prominent in both, and the child in the first quatrefoil appears to stretch out his right arm to Herod in a gesture of mute, futile appeal. The slightly later windows of c. 1330 in the choir of the Frauenkirche at Esslingen, which were earlier discussed as containing scenes of the Virgin being bathed as a baby and Christ led by his mother's hand as a toddler, also feature the Massacre in a single panel that combines Herod and one murderous soldier with a kneeling mother stretching out both arms in either supplication or horror.

To this list of examples could also be added the medium of embroidery as the Massacre features in one of the Infancy panels on the so-called Bologna Cope (Bologna, Museo Civico), embroidered in England around 1315-35;\textsuperscript{66} it shows one soldier raising an Innocent on his spear while a seated mother tears her hair in

\textsuperscript{62} Anderson (1963) 109, but especially Alan H. Nelson, 'On Recovering the Lost Corpus Christi Cycle', \textit{Comparative Drama} 4 (1970-71) 241-52, whose discussion of one of the Paston letters written on the eve of Corpus Christi Thursday, 20 May 1478, comparing the Lord of Suffolk to 'Herrod in Corpus Christy play', is very illuminating.

\textsuperscript{63} Louis Grodecki, \textit{Le vitrail roman} (Fribourg, 1977, repr. 1983), mentioning a lost example of c. 1140-47 at Saint-Denis (p. 94), from which the Massacre at Chartres may have been derived (p. 108, 280). See also Louis Grodecki and Catherine Brisac, \textit{Le vitrail gothique au XIIIe siècle} (Fribourg, 1984) pl. 150 showing Herod issuing his command in a window at Evreux. The examples at Tours and Lyons were found in the Princeton Index of Christian Art.

\textsuperscript{64} Gabriela Fritzsche, pl. IV.10, in Rüdiger Becksmann, \textit{Deutsche Glasmalerei des Mittelalters}, vol. 2: \textit{Bildprogramme, Auftraggeber, Werkstätten} (Berlin, 1992).


\textsuperscript{66} See Kay Stanisland, \textit{Embroiderers} (London, 1991) pl. 9.
despair, her distress evident from her facial expression. From the later medieval period, there is a Massacre amongst the seventeen tapestry scenes from the life of the Virgin commissioned in 1474 by Jean Rolin for the church of Notre-Dame at Beaune, which contains an impaled infant being presented to Herod as one of several familiar iconographic features. However, a list of examples of Massacre scenes in public art - both lost and surviving - would prove virtually limitless as well as grimly wearisome; to understand better how medieval people envisaged the Massacre in all its atrocity, one must look at its presentation in medieval drama before making further comparisons with medieval art.

THE MASSACRE IN LITURGICAL DRAMA

In Matthew's account, the comparison with Rachel touches upon the poignancy of the grief of the Bethlehem mothers at losing their children to such a gruesome fate. As the Latin liturgy developed an early form of church drama from ritual, it came to present the events connected with the Nativity and the Passion in cycles of plays to be performed on the appropriate days. Thus there was the Passion cycle for the Easter season while the Nativity cycle was performed around Christmas and Epiphany in several distinct plays: the Officium Pastorum on Christmas Day; the Officium Stellae about the Magi on Epiphany; a play of the prophets or Processus Prophetarum associated with Christmas Day; and the Ordo Rachelis to present the Massacre either on Epiphany or on Childermas.67 The earliest hint of dramatic dialogue can be found in manuscripts from Limoges and St Gall dating back to the first half of the tenth century, and two surviving versions of the dramatized Quem queritis in England date from c. 970 and 980; Latin liturgical drama seems to have reached its peak in the twelfth century but continued to be performed in western Europe throughout the medieval period.68 The various Christmas plays began to emerge in the second half of the eleventh century, and there are several versions of the Officium Stellae still extant which end with Herod giving the order for the Massacre. An exception is the version from Laon, which includes the Massacre and Rachel's lament at the very end; the actual Ordo Rachelis as a separate play has

68 Clifford Davidson, Drama and Art: An Introduction to the Use of Evidence from the Visual Arts for the Study of Early Drama, EDAM Monograph Series 1 (Kalamazoo, 1977) 6; Woolf (1972) 3-24. Woolf remarks, 3, that 'there are records of liturgical plays in England until the fifteenth century and there is no reason to doubt that they continued until suppressed in the sixteenth century with the rest of the Latin liturgy'.
survived in three versions, viz. from Freising in Germany, and from Limoges and Fleury in France.\textsuperscript{69}

The \textit{Ordo Rachelis} gave voices both to the Innocents in the Massacre and to Rachel symbolizing their mothers. The latter's role is not based solely on the words of the prophet Jeremiah, as quoted by Matthew, for tradition held that the biblical Rachel was actually buried near Bethlehem.\textsuperscript{70} Of course, being liturgical drama the Innocents are not represented by true infants as the instructions in the Laon text show: 'Interim Pueri, agnum portantes, intrant cantantes: "Ecce Agnus Dei, ecce qui tollit peccata mundi, alleluia"', soon followed by their only other line in 'Clamant Pueri dum occiduntur: "Quare non defendis sanguinem nostrum?"'\textsuperscript{71} The latter is very much the sentiment that Ælfric tried to counter in his homily discussed earlier. It is not so much the Innocents themselves as the maternal grief voiced by Rachel on which the different texts of the \textit{Ordo Rachelis} focus; after all, liturgical drama relied very much on dialogue and gesture rather than on lively action with props to convey to its audience the awfulness of the event. In the Laon play Rachel commences her lament 'cum fletu', weeping: 'O dulces innocentum acies! / O pia lactantum pro Xpisto certamina!'\textsuperscript{71} Then the figure of the \textit{Consolatrix} appears to try and comfort Rachel with the reminder that 'tui nati uiuunt super astra beati' but the thought that her sons now live in eternal bliss above the stars does not assuage her grief:

\begin{tabular}{ll}
Heu! Heu! & Quomodo gaudebo dum mortua membrauidebo? \\
Dum sic commota & fueroperuiscerotota \\
Me facient uere & puerisine fine dolere.\textsuperscript{72}
\end{tabular}

The \textit{Consolatrix}' final attempt reads like an echo from one of the homilies: 'Quam beata sunt innocentum ab Herode cesacopuscula! / Quam felices existunt matres, fuderunt que talia pignora!'\textsuperscript{73} But to no avail for Rachel's final words simply reiterate the words of Jeremiah and Matthew: 'Nolo consolari quia non sunt', I will not be comforted for they are not. Reading this, one might wonder whether similar 'consoling' words used by preachers and writers - compare the words from the

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{69} See Young (1919) who gives the complete text of the Laon \textit{Ordo Stellae} from the original manuscript (Laon, Bibliothèque de la Ville, MS 263) on 13-17, from which the quotations in this text are taken.

\textsuperscript{70} At least, according to Genesis 35:19-20; however, see also 1 Samuel 10:2 and Jeremiah 31:15.

\textsuperscript{71} Transl.: O sweet brightness of innocent children! O pious battles of suckling infants for Christ!

\textsuperscript{72} Transl.: Woe! Woe! How shall I rejoice whilst I see their dead remains? Whilst I shall be thus distraught because of all the entrails, truly the children shall cause me grief without end.

\textsuperscript{73} Transl.: How blessed are those little bodies of the innocents slaughtered by Herod! How happy their mothers are who brought forth such dear offspring!
\end{flushright}
Brome play of *Abraham and Isaac* quoted earlier in chapter 1 - would have been any more successful with bereft medieval mothers.

Although a separate play, the *Ordo Rachelis* from the monastery of St Martial at Limoges is a rather simple one. After the Innocents have been massacred, Rachel expresses her anguish as a mother in a single lament, only to be told by an angel that she should rather rejoice; the latter's repeated 'Ergo gaude!' elicits no further spoken reaction from Rachel. The version from the monastery of St Benoit at Fleury, on the other hand, is much more extensive: it includes the Angel's warning to Joseph, Herod being informed of the Magi's escape and ordering the Massacre while throughout all this the Innocents, dressed in white stoles, sing their praises to the Agnus Dei, who heads their procession. After the Innocents' slaughter by Herod's killers, which the *matres* try in vain to stop with a plea for mercy, Rachel enters the scene in the company of two *Consolatrices* and begins her lament. Three times the *Consolatrices* attempt to comfort her, advising her not to mourn: 'Si que tristaris, exulta que lacrimaris. / Namque tui nati uiuunt super astri beati'. However, her grief is not diminished even by this reminder of her sons' blessed elevation, and her reply echoes that given by the Laon Rachel. It is ultimately Rachel, 'cadens super pueros', who has the last word before being led away by the *Consolatrices*. The Fleury play does not end here, however, for an angel calls down to the Innocents to rise and join him in Heaven, their 'resurrection' being symbolized by their entering the choir of the church. Furthermore, a dumb show illustrates Herod's removal from the throne in favour of his son Archelaus, followed by the return of the Holy Family from Egypt as ordered by the angel. The Fleury version is an ambitious play but it still has Rachel's quadruple lament as its core while the role of the Innocents has also been increased dramatically. In contrast, the play from Freising is very different: it opens rather abruptly with the angel's annunciation to the shepherds, followed by the angel's warning to Joseph and the Holy Family's flight. Then Herod, after his ceremonious entrance, is warned about the Magi by a messenger, who proposes the slaughter of all male Bethlehem children as a solution; a soldier volunteers and Herod issues his command for the killing. Apart from the soldier's curt 'Disce mori, puer', the Massacre is essentially a dumb show; the Innocents are completely silent. Rachel's lament follows, twice interrupted by comforting words from the

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74 Young (1919) 23ff, edited this text from the surviving manuscript in Paris, BN ms. lat. 1139.
75 See Young (1919) 26-41 for both commentary and the text itself, edited from MS 201 at the Orléans Bibliothèque de la Ville.
76 Young (1919) 41-52, from the Munich Hofbibliothek manuscript Cod. lat. 6264, written in a twelfth-century hand.
Consolatrix who attempts to dry Rachel's eyes; the play ends with 'Te Deum laudamus'.

Although her part in liturgical drama varied across the different plays, Rachel became the proverbial sorrowing mother mourning the death of her children, and not just the Innocents; in the Canterbury Tales, Chaucer's Prioresse described the distraught mother of the dead 'litel clergeoun' as 'this newe Rachel' (I. 627). Clearly her symbolic role as the bereft Bethlehem mother struck a chord with medieval audiences. The gestures that the mothers display in medieval depictions of the Massacre vary greatly: there is the rather stilted horror one may observe in the two women in the Winchester Psalter illumination or the type of wailing woman raising her arms in the classical style of lamentation, either of which may resemble the more ceremonial sorrow of liturgical drama. Sometimes a mother is shown rending her clothes in the ancient but eastern tradition of mourning, an example being a wall-painting of c. 1200 in the church of Saint-Martin at Aime, Savoie; here the central mother with her nimbus and tragic looks clearly represents Rachel herself. Even earlier, from around the middle of the twelfth century, is the mural around the arches of the entrance from the cloister to the chapterhouse in the Benedictine abbey of Saint-Aubin in Angers, which shows Rachel weeping and tearing her hair as she watches the slaughter. Alternatively, there is the woman almost prostrated in her grief like the biblical Rachel; she is the type of mother one finds so frequently in depictions of the Massacre in medieval art, especially in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, e.g. the kneeling woman on the far left in the Amiens quatrefoil relief who is clasping the remains of her slaughtered child in her despair, or a similar figure in the Massacre scene sculpted on the embrasures of the west portal ('Portail Royal') of c. 1145-50 at Chartres Cathedral. This brings to mind the figure of Rachel 'cadens super pueros' in the Fleury Ordo Rachelis, for

77 See Paul Deschamps and Marc Thibaut, La peinture murale en France au début de l'époque gothique, de Philippe-Auguste à la fin du règne de Charles V (1180-1380) (Paris, 1963) 92-94 and pl. XL; Deschamps and Thibaut interpret this as byzantine influence and a link with the Old Testament, without mentioning liturgical drama. See also Johann-Christian Klamt, Emotie en actie: Over kordate moeders in laatmiddeleeuwse voorstellingen van "De Kindermoord van Bethlehem", in R E V Stuip and C Vellekoop (eds), Emoties in de Middeleeuwen (Hilversum, 1998) 199-216, esp. 200 and pi. 5-6.

78 Christian Davy, La peinture murale romane dans les pays de la Loire: L'indicible et le ruban plissé, La Mayenne: Archéologie, Histoire, suppl. 10 (Laval, 1999) 156-61, esp. 159.

79 This specific type of mother, kneeling down while clutching the remains of her dead child, is discussed by Rudolph Binion in 'Three Mourning Mothers: The Making and Unmaking of a Christian Figural Complex', Journal of Psychohistory 26:1 (Summer 1998) 449-77, and shown in a number of illustrations, including the stained glass of the central west window of Chartres Cathedral from the mid twelfth century; f. 18v of the Ingeborg Psalter of c. 1200 (Musée Condé, Chantilly, MS 1695) and f. 86r of the early thirteenth-century Bible moralisée in Paris BN ms. lat. 11560. Binion discusses this type in relation with that of the Virgin embracing the body of her dead son, and with the later Piaità.
liturgical drama did influence the iconography in this period. Yet other mothers, such as the central figure in the Amiens quatrefoil, seem to try and protect their children, shielding them from the approaching soldiers. Some women are shown kneeling as if in supplication for the lives of their children, pleading either with Herod or with his soldiers, but always in vain; one such a woman can be seen in an English illuminated Massacre scene in the St Albans Psalter of c. 1120-30 (Hildesheim, Basilika St Godehard), beseeching a soldier who is already thrusting his sword into her baby's naked body. Another woman in this scene is clutching the leg of this same soldier and apparently biting him in the leg although alternatively her open mouth may simply suggest that she, too, is pleading in a traditional pose of supplication. Above them, yet another woman grabs the arm of the soldier on the far right in an attempt to stop him from killing her son with his raised sword; such more active roles played by Bethlehem mothers will be discussed in greater detail below. It seems fair, though, to quote these examples to counter the statement by Moshe Barash that 'in the art of France and the neighboring countries there was very little dramatic gesticulation in scenes of sacred character before the fourteenth century'.

THE MASSACRE IN THE MYSTERY PLAYS
As medieval drama developed, the Massacre was seized upon by vernacular playwrights for its dramatic and visual potential. Although there are no extant versions of the liturgical Ordo Rachelis in England like there are from the German regions and France, vernacular mystery plays survive from all these areas. Even though it is impossible to discuss these texts in great detail, it will be useful to compare some of the continental versions with their Middle-English counterparts.

Middle-German and Middle-Dutch mystery plays
As discussed in chapter 3, the medieval German-speaking areas had their Christmas and Easter cycles; the former depicted the events around Christ's Nativity, often in quite a lively fashion, and some still include the Massacre. An early example is the

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81 For the St Albans Psalter, see Otto Pächt, C R Dodwell and Francis Wormald, The St Albans Psalter (Albani Psalter) (London, 1960); also Zarnecki et al. (1984) cat. 17. This interpretation by Pächt, 85, of the mother in the St Albans Psalter biting the soldier's leg, was adopted by Kathleen Nolan, "Ploratus et ululatus": The Mothers in the Massacre of the Innocents at Chartres Cathedral, Studies in Iconography 17 (1996), 103 and pl. 5.
82 Moshe Barash, Gestures of Despair in Medieval and Early Renaissance Art (New York, 1976) 80; the Massacre of the Innocents is discussed intermittently (64ff) but the focus is very much on Italian art.
Benediktbeuren Weihnachtsspiel, which may date from around 1230, but although not a liturgical play it is still in Latin instead of the vernacular. The Weihnachtsspiel from St Gallen survives in a fifteenth-century copy although the original version may date back to the late thirteenth century. In this play Herod orders the slaughter and professes himself indifferent 'ob diu wib dar vmb warnent vil'. The text does not indicate the enactment of the Massacre but a long lament by Rachel follows the direction 'hie klag die [C]ristenheit ire kind'.

Another surviving Massacre play in Middle-German can be found in the Erlau Weihnachtsspiel of the first half of the fifteenth century; the second play in this cycle, the Ludus trium magorum, does not contain just the Adoration by the Magi and their preceding visit to Herod but also the Annunciation to the Shepherds and their message to Herod, the Flight into Egypt followed by the Massacre. The Erlau ludus with its inclusion of antiphons, responses and hymns is reminiscent of the liturgical Adoratio and Ordo Rachelis plays from Freising, and in this respect more formal than its English vernacular counterparts. After Herod has consulted the 'scribes' and clients at his court, he repeats in his order almost verbally the advice given by the primus scriba:

\[
\text{und was ir vindet junger chind,}  \\
\text{di hinder zwain jarn sind,}  \\
\text{daz ir di mit nichte meidet}  \\
\text{und in di hals ab sneidet.}
\]

Herod's court jester Lappa offers to join the soldiers and promises to dye his hands in the Innocents' blood and kill them all, even if there were 'hundert tausent' of them, thus introducing an element of farce. The party departs in search of the children and finds the first victims, in whose murders the men express great delight. They then encounter Rachel, just as in the liturgical plays, and Lappa addresses her thus:

\[
\text{Rachel, wo sind deine chind,}  \\
\text{di hinder zwain jarn sind?}  \\
\text{[...]}  \\
\text{in muß hie von meiner hand}  \\
\text{der grimmig tod werden pechant.}
\]

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83 See Bergmann (1986) no. 119.
84 Bätschmann (1977) 1. 974. Transl.: whether the women will weep for it.
85 Bätschmann (1977) prior to 1. 1004. Transl.: here Christendom laments her children.
87 Kummer (1977) ll. 303-6. Transl.: And when you find any young children who are under two years old, then you must not let them escape but cut their throats.
88 Kummer (1977) ll. 344-45 and 349-50. Transl.: Rachel, where are your children who are under two years old? [...] They must here become acquainted with grim death through my hand.
After Lappa's speech, the play winds down very quickly with a six-line lament by Rachel, followed by a curt 'et sic est finis'. Of course, it is difficult from the mere text how the play was actually performed. It is curious that the author actually added elements, such as the jester, yet made relatively little in his text to tell of Rachel's grief, compared to some of the surviving liturgical plays. However, the lively interchange between Lappa and his companions presents quite a brutal account of their actions, which on stage probably looked very grim. The Erlau play is the oldest surviving Middle-German Dreikönigspiel and does not appear to have had any direct influence on any other extant versions. Unfortunately, the Hessen Weihnachtszpiel of c. 1450-60, in which Joseph featured so prominently as the provider of cradle and hose, does not include the Massacre, nor does the Tirol Weihnachtszpiel of c. 1511; other plays survive, but of later date. Of course, for all that remains, so much more must have been lost.

A unique and early survival is a Middle-Dutch Easter play, the Maastricht Paasspel, written before c. 1350 in a Lower-Rhine dialect, which presents in a relatively brief space the story of Man's redemption including the Massacre. Here the messenger informs Herod of the Magi's secret departure and one of the king's knights advises him to retain his power by sending out men to search and kill 'alle die kindolin / die bennen zwen iaren syn'. After Gabriel has advised the Virgin to flee to Egypt, Herod's knights appear in search of the children and are met by Rachel who expresses fear at the sight of their weapons and behaviour. Thereupon the stage direction indicates the commencement of the killing and one of the soldiers demands Rachel's child upon pain of death, telling her that she must watch it die before her very eyes; Rachel is allowed no further speech. The triumphant words of one of the returning knights to Herod suggests that the Massacre was not just confined to Bethlehem: 'die kent haen wir irslagen / in al dat lant van Juda'.

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89 Bergmann (1986) nos. 71 and 149.
90 Martin Stevens, 'The York Cycle: From Procession to Play', Leeds Studies in English, n.s. 5 (1971) 48, discussed the continuing and well documented tradition of Corpus Christi processions in continental Europe, quoting the example of the lavish and hugely popular pageants at Munich, which in 1612 included the Massacre as portrayed by the smiths and 'accompanied by twenty old women carrying their murdered children'. Van den Eerenbeemt (1935) 290, mentions 'a play performed at Gouda in 1548, which required two or three little boys dressed in white with wreaths on their heads and palm-branches in their hands to represent the Innocents.
92 Zacher (1842) II. 504-5. Transl.: all children who are within two years of age.
93 Zacher (1842) II. 549-50. Transl.: we have killed the children in all the land of Judah.
Middle-French mystery plays

France has a rich heritage of extant vernacular drama, which includes mystery plays featuring the Massacre. Once again, it would be impossible to present a complete study but a short discussion two of the plays will give some idea. The *Mistere de la passion nostre seigneur* from Troyes dates from the fifteenth century and is quite an extensive drama starting with the Creation; paradoxically it does not include the actual Passion of Christ and it is unclear whether this ever existed at Troyes. Devils play a prominent part in the events surrounding the Nativity and the Flight into Egypt, after which Herod returns from Rome in accordance with the historical tradition, discovers the secret departure of the Magi and decides upon the deaths of all children under the age of death, with dire warnings against any of his soldiers

\[
\text{qui espargne ne sœur ne frère,} \\
\text{ou ait pitié de père ou mère,} \\
\text{ou soit corrompu par pecune (I. 7374-76)}
\]

The soldiers, who are all named individually, then set off, albeit with some misgivings as Achopart remarks of his colleague Agrippart: 'il redoute bien les meres / qui souvant sont de grant courage' (I. 7385-86). In the light of visual presentations of the Massacre, Agrippart's reply is quite telling: 'Il ne me demorra visage / qui de griffes ne soit defait' (I. 7387-88). When encountering the first mother, the soldier Rechiné demands her child from her, referring to it by the interesting term 'poupart' (I. 7395). Then follows an extensive verbal - and violent - interplay between the soldiers and four mothers, who are also given names: Raab, Rachael, Adromata and Arbeline. Expressions of sorrow are vividly mixed with insults and grim humour: for example, Achopart takes care to enquire about the age of Rachael's child, who is 'treize mois', and after killing it he makes the macabre joke that he has given the child a medicine through which it will never be ill again (I. 7436-37). The Massacre itself ends with the soldiers mistakenly killing Herod's own son, whose nurse Medusa then goes off to report this to Herod himself; the play, however, continues with Herod's death and Gabriel's instruction to Joseph to return from Egypt.

Very similar to the Troyes play is the Massacre scene in the *Mystère de la passion* performed in 1501 at Mons (Hainault); this play is important in retaining

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95 See the critical edition by Jean-Claude Bibolet, *Le 'Mystère de la Passion' de Troyes* (Geneva, 1987) vol. 1; quotations will be from this edition.
96 See Oosterwijk (1997a).
its ‘livre de conduite du régisseur’ and accounts. Its additional stage directions also provide further information, such as that for Medusa’s maid Sabine when Herod’s son has been killed by the king’s own soldiers: ‘Lors elle prend le cariot et met l’enfant futif dedens’, an enfant futif being a wooden doll of the type used not just to represent the Innocents but also perhaps the infant Christ in the Nativity. Interestingly, the stage direction at the soldiers’ departure for Bethlehem refers to nourices rather than to mothers; Raab, Lya, Micol, Arbeline and Andromaca(!) are all named nourice when each makes her appearance, although Arbeline’s exclamation ‘Que feras-tu, dolente mere’ suggests that nursing mothers may have been intended. Of course, Herod’s own son is looked after by the ominously named Medusa, the professional ‘nourice du filz Herode’; his death by being ‘trenchié tout d’un cop / En deux pars’ follows upon the soldiers’ boasts about the many thousands of infants they have killed. Clearly, brutal language and action, and also an element of farce, were familiar features in the Middle-French mystery plays.

Middle-English mystery plays

Whereas the liturgical plays emphasized maternal grief, the vernacular mystery plays obviously allowed scope for violence between mothers and soldiers, and even at times an element of humour. These features are prominently present in the Middle-English plays, which do not feature Rachel as the symbolic mother but instead permit the anonymous women of Bethlehem themselves to express their individual feelings, and not just their grief. Six Middle-English Massacre plays survive, viz. in the York and Chester cycles, in the so-called N-Town play (or Ludus Coventriae), in the Shearmen and Taylors’ Pageant from the two surviving Coventry Corpus Christi plays, in the Towneley or Wakefield cycle, and in the relatively late Digby plays. It is difficult to date these cycles or their first emergence as the surviving manuscript copies are often much later, but there is evidence to suggest that there was a London cycle in existence by the mid fourteenth century. Many plays have, of course, been lost, especially since their performance was

97 Gustave Cohen, Le livre de conduite du régisseur et le compte des dépenses pour le mystère de la passion joué à Mons en 1501, Publications de la Faculté des Lettres de l’Université de Strasbourg 23 (Strasbourg, 1925).
98 Cohen (1925) 103 and cvii, j; also Oosterwijk (1997a).
99 Woolf (1972) 58. Stevens (1971) 37-61, argued that the York plays developed out of a Corpus Christi procession with tableaux vivants presented by the various trade guilds, which gradually came to include spoken lines; in view of this, he proposed that the fully developed cycles at York and elsewhere were performed much later than generally supposed, i.e. in the second quarter of the fifteenth rather than the last quarter of the fourteenth century. Certainly no mystery-play manuscript survives from the fourteenth century but the evidence does point at the Massacre and other biblical events being presented on stage in some form well before the fifteenth century.
abolished in England in the sixteenth century, while those that survive may have been altered or added to over the years; as mentioned earlier, the York Purification play was most likely a later addition and copied out of sequence after the Emmaus scene in the manuscript. The story is basically the same in all six plays; however, there are significant variations amongst them.

Ideal maternal behaviour introduces the scene of the Massacre in the Coventry Pageant of the Shearmen and Taylors, in which the anxious Bethlehem mothers make their first appearance singing a specially adapted version of the familiar medieval type of lullaby for, as the first woman explains:

I lolle my chylde wondursly swete,
And in my narmis I do hyt kepe,
Be-cawse thatt yt schuld not crye.101

As the song suggests, the mothers are aware of the birth of Christ and of Herod's intentions, and are trying to hush their children in order to keep their presence hidden - unsuccessfully, of course. In the N-Town play the tragedy of the slaughter of innocent children is made more intense by the transformation of a mother's lullaby into a lament for her dead child: 'Long lullynge haue I lorn! / Alas, Qwhy was my baron bom?102 At the same time, the second mother's recollection of her 'fourty wekys gronynge' (l. 101) may have touched women in the medieval audience many of whom must have shared the experience of both bearing and losing children. In the Towneley play the second of the three mothers bewails 'My chyld that was me lefe! / My luf, my blood, my play'.103 Rachel's lament also received a vivid dramatization in the York Corpus Christi play where two mothers bewail their loss:

II Mulier: Allas, hislothly striffe,  
No blisse may be my bette,  
De knyght vpon his knyffe
Hath slayne my sone so swette,  
And I hadde but hym allone.

I Mulier: Allas, I lose my liffe,  
Was neuere so wofull a wyffe
Ne halffe so wille of wone [...]  
Allas þat we wer wrughte  
In worlde women to be,  
De barne þat wee dere bought  
Þus in our sighte to see  
Disputuously spill.104

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100 Woolf (1972) 196.
102 Stephen Spector (ed.), The N-Town Play: Cotton MS Vespasian D.8, 2 vols, EETS, s.s. 11 and 12 (Oxford, 1991), II. 89-90; all further quotations from this play are from this edition.
103 Martin Stevens and A C Cawley (eds), The Towneley Plays, 2 vols, EETS, s.s. 13 and 14 (Oxford, 1994), II. 524-25; further quotations from this play refer to this edition.
104 Richard Beadle (ed.), The York Plays, York Medieval Texts, s.s. (London, 1982), II. 210-14, 215-17 and 226-30, respectively; this edition is used for all quotations from the York play in this chapter.
A personal detail is found in the Digby play where one woman is heard bemoaning 'my yong sone Iohn'. The children's innocence and helplessness are clearly stressed, for example by the first woman in the Coventry Pageant:

For a sympull sclaghtur yt were to sloo
Or to wyrke soche a chyld woo,
That can noder speyke nor goo,
Nor neuer harme did. (ll. 851-54)

The mothers' emotions are palpable and there is ample evidence in the texts to suggest that the Massacre itself was acted out with every intention of making the brutality of the event as obvious as possible.

Whereas the York and N-town women are quite moving in their expressions of grief and despair, the poignancy of the Bethlehem mothers' distress in the English mystery plays is sometimes starkly offset against their virago-like behaviour towards the soldiers. Some critics have clearly felt ill at ease with this seeming descent from tragedy into farce, and the commentary on ll. 325-36 of the Chester goldsmiths' play notes: 'The laments of the women are suggested by Matthew 2/17-18, and were a feature of the liturgical drama. Here, however, the sense of sorrow is subsumed under the vindictiveness and comic belligerence of the women.' Another critic somewhat patronizingly described the mothers' reaction as understandable anger and hysteria. Herod's soldiers are on the whole presented as vile butchers rather than knights, and often cowards at heart despite their obvious advantage of arms and armour over unarmed mothers and infants. Their actions are matched by their crude language, especially when referring to their victims and their gender. The Digby play even adds the grotesque character of the boorish Watkyn, a farcical would-be knight rather like his Erlau counterpart Lappa; he is proud to prove his worth as a killer of infants yet mortally afraid of angry mothers who 'be as fers as a lyon in a cage' (l. 231) - and with good reason, as will appear.

Although the text of the York play concentrates on the women's expressions of sorrow it does suggest at least an element of active physical resistance acted out on stage. By contrast, in the 'Towneley, Chester and Digby plays the mothers' grief is blatantly mixed with both verbal and physical abuse aimed at the soldiers, often with a strong element of farce. The fourth Digby mother confronts the soldiers with the threat that 'we women shall make a-geyns you resistens, / after

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105 F J Furnivall (ed.), The Digby Plays, EETS, e.s. 70 (1896, repr. London, 1930), l. 321; quotations from the Digby play throughout this chapter are from this edition.
106 Commentary in vol. 2 of Lumianski and Mills (1986) 154; this edition is used for all lines quoted from the Chester play.
our power' (ll. 303-4), which means a seemingly unequal fight with fists and distaffs against the soldiers' more lethal weapons. The third Towneley mother's 'Haue at the, say I, / Take the ther a foyn!' (ll. 551-52) is sufficient inducement for the soldiers to retreat, albeit only after the murders have taken place, while in the Chester play the actual Massacre itself is a particularly disturbing exchange of brutalities between the mothers and the soldiers throughout. To understand this violent aspect of what in essence still tragic drama, it will be useful to take a closer look at similar depictions of the Massacre in medieval art.

THE VIOLENCE OF THE MASSACRE IN MEDIEVAL ART

In his 1977 study on drama and art, Clifford Davidson stated: 'It is perhaps axiomatic that much of medieval drama cannot be dissociated from the visual arts, though controversy remains with regard to the precise nature of the relationship between the static representations of the artists and the temporal displays of the early theater'. The brutality of the soldiers is what one would expect to find both in drama and art, but the violent reactions of the mothers in the Middle-English plays should perhaps be read as part of a visual tradition.

The resisting Bethlehem mother had long been known in art, juxtaposed with the lamenting Rachel type. Although the Amiens quatrefoil shows just a defiantly protective mother and the mother clinging to the soldier's leg in the St Albans Psalter illumination is ambiguous, a new development can be discovered around the mid thirteenth century when a kneeling mother, shown in the lower register of the tympanum of the north transept portal at Notre-Dame in Paris, is depicted as trying to defend her child by grabbing with her bare left hand the sword of an attacking soldier. It may be that the motif originally derived in the thirteenth century from depictions of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, in which the angel halts Abraham by taking hold of his sword; in the late thirteenth-century illustrated prayer-book of Marie de Gavre (BN ms. nouv. acq. fr. 16251, f. 24v), another mother is shown trying desperately to stop the soldier in the centre by catching his raised sword in her bare hand. Somehow this particular type may have changed into that of mothers actively engaging Herod's soldiers in a fight. An early French example may be an otherwise unreferenced manuscript illumination found through the Warburg Institute's photographic collection and labelled only 'Provence c. 1265', in which a soldier is attacked from behind by a mother trying to take hold of his

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108 Davidson (1977) 1.
109 See Williamson (1995) 151 and pl. 225; the portal is dated c. 1245-50.
arm rather than his sword. Somewhat later is the mural in the choir of the church at Marchésieux (Manche), dating from around 1300, which shows a mother grabbing the neck of one of the soldiers while raising her right hand to strike him with her _battoir à linge_, a typical female implement used in washing laundry. Although some mothers wield similar female attributes, such as the distaff, many simply use their hands as weapons - the very 'griffes' that the soldier Agrippart feared so much in the Troyes play.

The attacking mother became a relatively popular type from the early fourteenth century onwards and English art provides a range of examples; for example, in the large illumination on f. 132 of the Queen Mary Psalter one kneeling mother on the left is clearly trying to fight off one of the soldiers, their violent exchange mirrored by the fight between two hybrid creatures in the bottom margin. Among the scenes from the life of Christ on f. 124v of the almost contemporary De Lisle Psalter, another Bethlehem mother grabs the face of a soldier with her left hand to protect the naked child she is clutching in her right. The theme also occurs in continental manuscripts and several examples were found in manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford: on f. xxa of a French mid fourteenth-century missal (MS Douce 313), on f. 93v of a Norman-French book of hours from around the second quarter of the fifteenth century (MS Auct. D. infra 2.11), and in a fifteenth-century Dutch book of hours (MS Douce 93, f. 34v). The latter illumination is particularly violent with three mothers attacking Herod's soldiers: one seizes a soldier from behind while two others use huge clubs as weapons. In the Norman-French hours (MS Auct. D. infra 2.11), the Massacre is enacted as a minutely painted backdrop to the main scene of the Flight into Egypt; the mother's distaff is still discernible. Four more examples were found through the Princeton Index of Christian Art in Utrecht. Artists found a variety of ways to show maternal violence, or otherwise acts of desperation, in Massacre scenes; Evert van Soudenbalch's Dutch history bible of c. 1460 (Codex 2772, f. 15r) shows a woman lying on the ground and kicking a soldier in an attempt to protect the naked infant in her arms. The theme also occurred in sculpture, as shown in a small

111 Deschamps and Thibaut (1963) 129-30 and pl. LXV.1.
113 The gesture of a kneeling mother in a Massacre scene in another Dutch book of hours of the fifteenth century (MS Douce 248, f. 121v) is slightly more difficult to interpret.
114 Philadelphia, psalter-hours MS Lib. Free 2,3B, f. 3v; Paris, Franciscan breviary BN ms. lat. 1288, f. 125v; Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, psalter of St Louis and Blanche, ms. 1186, f. 19v; and New York, Cloisters Apocalypse MS 68.174, f. 2v.
oak relief from a retable, made in Antwerp and dating from the early sixteenth century, which features a mother grabbing a soldier's face.\footnote{42x786}{In gotischer Gesellschaft, cat. 21.}

The type of militant mother can also be found in German and Flemish panel painting, as recently discussed in an essay on medieval emotion and action.\footnote{42x786}{In gotischer Gesellschaft, cat. 21.} One is an anonymous predella scene produced in Steiermarken around 1530, now in the Steiermärkisches Landesmuseum Joanneum in Graz, and shows a bold woman in the centre resolutely grabbing the arm of quite a masculine soldier wielding a dagger; another is a panel painted by an unknown artist in Antwerp around 1515, now in the Hannover Landesgalerie, which depicts a woman in the foreground seizing a kneeling soldier by the hair before landing him a blow with her fist. The earliest example of the three, however, is interesting for its provenance as it is the work of an unknown master of c. 1480 from Freising in Bavaria, home of one of the surviving plays of the \textit{Ordo Rachelis}; the panel is now in the collection of the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg. While also notable for the prominent presence of Herod on the right and for the chubby, almost putto-like appearance of the naked Innocents, it shows a single distraught mother frantically attacking a soldier in armour from behind; her open mouth and rolling eyes express great pain, but is it mental anguish or instead due to the very physical effect of having her fingers bitten by the soldier, as has been suggested?\footnote{42x786}{The interpretation by Klamt, in Stuip and Vellekoop (1998) 209, that the agonized expression on the mother's face is due simply to the fact that the soldier is biting her fingers, would lend this panel a farcical rather than tragic character, especially when there is no other sorrowing mother to adjust the balance; the soldier under attack shows little evidence of pain himself even when having his hair pulled. In all, the real grief must surely be caused by the vicious slaughter of the five naked infants.} One cannot help wondering whether this desperate rather than resolute mother with her maidenly loose hair could have been inspired by the distraught 'uirgo mater' Rachel of the local liturgical drama. Of course, Bethlehem mothers in early Christian art wear their hair loose and uncovered as a traditional sign of mourning, as shown on f. 24v of the 'Augsburger Purpurevangeliar' (Munich, Staatsbibliothek clm. 23631), which also includes one soldier at the bottom quite gratuitously pulling a kneeling mother by her loose hair.\footnote{42x786}{See Kötzsche-Breitenbruch (1968-69) 108-9 for the difference in opinion regarding the dating of this separately added miniature as either late antique, Carolingian or Ottonian.} Providing interesting parallels and discussion in his essay on the three German and Flemish panel paintings, the author yet appears to have been unaware of both the literary topos of militant Bethlehem mothers and its spread as a visual motif in medieval art across north-western Europe.

In England such vivid depictions of the Massacre were also popular in public places. Although a great many medieval murals have been lost, a badly damaged
version of the Massacre dating from the early fourteenth century has been identified on the east wall of the north transept of St George's church, Kelmscott (Oxfordshire); it still vaguely shows the naked body of a child being held upside down while the face of another can still be recognized lying on the ground.120 In a better preserved, early fourteenth-century wall-painting on the south wall of the nave at All Saints' church in Croughton (Northamptonshire) a seated mother clings to a child dressed in a long tunic, who is being torn from her arms by a soldier wielding a sword; another child, who appears to be naked, is held upside down by his right leg by another armed soldier, and there are remains of infants already slaughtered still visible around the scene.121 The slightly later wall-painting in the chancel of St Mary's church at Chalgrove (Oxfordshire) shows a more aggressive mother trying to hit or even pinch the face of the soldier about to kill the naked and clearly male child in her arms; her mode of defence is reminiscent of that observed in some of the manuscript illuminations where mothers aim for the soldiers' faces.122

Obviously, images like these were part of a traditional motif, which was to find its literary counterpart in the blows exchanged between the Bethlehem mothers and Herod's soldiers later on the stage of the mystery plays, even though this does not mean that the drama was directly influenced by art. In fact, it is quite possible that drama itself had an impact on how artists envisaged certain scenes. This is perhaps best illustrated by a stained-glass panel of the Massacre, c. 1430, in the east window of St Peter Mancroft church in Norwich, which is contemporary with the mystery plays performed in this area.123 It shows, in a highly dramatic fashion, an unarmed woman fiercely grappling from behind a soldier who has just impaled a naked infant on his sword, while an ermine-clad Herod himself is actively participating in the Massacre by cutting in half a naked Innocent with a scimitar.124 The soldiers' armour and the dress of the two mothers and, possibly, one father lend the scene a contemporary medieval flavour as does the unusual motif of the rocking cradle in the central foreground, from which a naked sprawling infant has just been plucked by one of the soldiers to be transfixed with his sword.

121 E W Tristram and M R James, 'Wall-Paintings in Croughton Church, Northamptonshire', Archaeologia 76 (1927) 179-204; also E W Tristram, English Wall Painting of the Fourteenth Century (London, 1955) 73-75, 162-65, and pl. 21. It should be noted that Tristram's own copied versions differ from the original in some significant details.
122 For Chalgrove, see Tristram (1955) 84-86, 153-55 and pl. 30; also Alexander and Binski (1987) cat. 93. The painting of the Massacre is now in a much worse state than that suggested by Tristram's illustration, although it is still possible to recognize some details omitted in the plate.
124 See Skey (1980) 7, in which the window at St Peter Mancroft church is also briefly discussed.
However, there is a much earlier example of the Massacre in English stained glass, which bears some resemblance to this window, in the south clerestory glass in the choir of York Minster, dating from c. 1350; it shows a prominently enthroned Herod giving his command to three ugly-looking soldiers, two armed with spears and one with a sword on which he is already presenting an impaled Innocent. Although there are no women actively resisting, two mothers are on the ground trying to protect their children; the one in the bottom left corner anxiously seizes her son in his elaborately decorated Gothic rocking cradle. A third woman approaches Herod with an enigmatic expression on her face while holding the body of a child; is she just one of the anguished mothers or could she be the nurse of Herod's own son?

Examples of the Massacre in French and German stained glass have already been mentioned although mention should be made of a German stained-glass panel of the first half of the sixteenth century, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, which shows two women desperately attacking Herod's soldiers.125 Other surviving Massacre scenes in English stained glass can be found at Ashbourne and Westminster Abbey, both from the thirteenth century; at York Minster with three examples from the fourteenth century, of which one has already been discussed; and at Erpingham, Newark and Wormbridge from the fifteenth century.126 The Massacre is also shown far away in the background of two Flight into Egypt panels, one in the late-medieval east window of the Lady Chapel at Fairford and the other in one of the windows of the chapel of Hengrave Hall in Suffolk, dating back to the second quarter of the sixteenth century.127 Interestingly, Herod himself appears in a panel among the nave clerestory windows at Fairford as one of the persecutors of the Church, not just holding his customary unsheathed sword but actually using it to stab a sprawling, naked blonde infant.128

One specific exchange from the Chester play, in which the second woman warns the first soldier that 'this distaffe and thy head shall meete' (I. 303), would

125 I am grateful to Mr Nigel Wilkins of the National Monuments Record for drawing my attention to this window.
126 According to the far from complete list in Pinton Cowen, A Guide to Stained Glass in Britain (London, 1985) 245; the examples at York are named as nos. 28 in the south choir aisle, 31 in the east wall above the south altar and 99 in the south-choir clerestory. Miss Sarah Brown informed me that there was also a Massacre in the stained glass at Ledbury (Gloucestershire) although little more than a fragment now remains.
127 For the Fairford glass, window 4, see Sarah Brown and Lindsay MacDonald (eds), Life, Death and Art: The Medieval Stained Glass of Fairford Parish Church. A Multimedia Exploration (Stroud, 1997) plate 4 and enlargement on the accompanying CD-ROM. It shows three soldiers in armour performing the slaughter with a sword, a spear and a scimitar; the glaziers used silver stain to give the naked infants attractive blonde hair, much in the way that the artist responsible for the foetus diagrams in an English fifteenth-century medical miscellany (BL MS Sloane 249, f. 196v-197v) chose to adorn many of the ink-drawn foetuses with fair curly hair.
128 See Brown and MacDonald (1997), with the window shown on the CD-ROM.
have had a familiar ring for medieval audiences. It has been argued that the mothers' use of distaffs against the soldiers would have reminded medieval audiences of the celebration of St Distaff's Day on 7 January; nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that the distaff was, of course, the female attribute par excellence and as such the archetypal weapon used by women against men in depictions of the Battle of the Sexes. Although no visual parallels to this particular exchange were found in English art, it does occur on the Continent, as we have seen; two more French examples can be found on f. 102 of the Hours of Marguerite d'Orléans of c. 1430 (Paris, BN ms. latin 1156 B) and in the Hours of Louis d'Orléans, f. 36, dating from c. 1490 (St Petersburg, Saltykov-Shchedrin Library, MS Lat. O. V. I. N. 126). In this second manuscript, underneath the main scene in which a woman vainly attacks one soldier from behind, the illuminator has added two small vignettes: in the left one a woman is anxiously trying to protect her swaddled child while the right one shows a soldier about to be struck by a virago-like woman armed with a distaff. Incidentally, in the Massacre scene in the Hours of Louis d'Orléans, the mothers are shown wearing the turban-like head-dresses that can also be observed in the initial D in the slightly earlier Hours of Mary of Burgundy; although the women here seem powerless, the illuminator appears to have referred to the initial scene by including in his border images of a lion attacking a dove and a bird perching on a nest.

Of course, the mothers' vigour can neither save the Innocents nor outdo the visual impact of the dramatized Massacre, in which props would have played a prominent and effective role. Anderson noted that 'by shaking a spitted dummy its death agonies could have been suggested with some verisimilitude, even if the producer stopped short of the disgusting realism of a sixteenth-century pageant about St Thomas' martyrdom, given at Canterbury, when a leather bag full of blood was used'. Despite Anderson's misgivings, it seems likely that the medieval dramatists would indeed have striven for the utmost realism; a 1580 text from Modane mentions a stage stabbing followed by blood issuing forth 'à la

130 Although outside the area of study here, it is worth noting that the theme of the fighting mother, sometimes armed with a distaff, also occurs quite frequently in Danish medieval wall-painting from the mid fifteenth century onwards; I am grateful to Mr James Mills for providing me with a list of examples.
131 Both manuscripts have been published in facsimile editions, viz. Eberhard König, Les Heures de Marguerite d'Orléans, translated from German (Paris, 1991); Andrej Sterligow, Das Stundenbuch Ludwigs von Orléans, translated from Russian (Leipzig, 1980) 2 vols. For the latter, see also Tamona Veronova and Andrei Sterligov, Les manuscrits enluminés occidentaux du XIIe au XVIe siècle à la Bibliothèque Nationale de Russie de Saint-Pétersbourg (St Petersburg, 1996) 187.
maniere accoutumée'.

It has been suggested that in the German Massacre plays wooden dolls filled with blood were used, which the soldiers would have transfixed on their swords or spears.

In later medieval art the depiction of martyrdoms and of Christ's suffering became increasingly gory with great emphasis on wounds dripping with blood; an example is the Massacre scene in a German picture bible of c. 1410-20 from the Strasbourg area.

However, early fourteenth-century wall-paintings of the Massacre in Chalgrove and Headington (Oxfordshire, now lost) also show copious amounts of blood pouring from the bodies of Innocents.

Blood is also visible, albeit more subtly, in the stained glass at St Peter Mancroft church, Norwich. In the plays the spilling of blood is certainly implied, with the first Digby soldier promising that 'we shall make a flood / To renne in the stretis by ther blood shedyng' (ll. 287-88). The Towneley mother's lament 'My luf, my blood, my play' could have been visualized on stage as a grim pun.

The mothers' violent reactions as presented in art as well as in the mystery plays appears to have become a byword, much like Herod's rage; Woolf quoted Chaucer's ironic description in his Merchant's Tale of old January's shock at witnessing his wife's antics in the pear-tree:

And up he yaf a roryng and a cry,
As dooth the moother whan the child shal dye:
'Out! help; alas! harrow!' he gan to crye.

The Massacre provided ample scope for (over)acting and many modern readers have felt uncomfortable with the seemingly farcical interaction between the mothers

Peter Meredith and John E Tailby (eds), The Staging of Religious Drama in Europe in the Later Middle Ages: Texts and Documents in English Translation, EDAM Monograph Series 4 (Kalamazoo, 1983) 105ff.

Golith (1912) 531: 'Beim bethlehemitischen Kindermord liegen in den Wiegen hölzerne, mit Blut gefüllte Puppen, die von den Soldaten aufgespießt werden'.

Now divided over two libraries, this picture bible was reproduced in a combined facsimile edition by Josef Hermann Beckmann and Ingeborg Schroth (eds), Picture Bible of the Late Middle Ages, facsimile edition of MS 334 (University Library Freiburg im Breisgau) and MS 719-720 (Pierpont Morgan Library New York) (Constance, 1960); although partly reproduced in black and white, the liberal use of red pigment shown in the colour reproductions gives a good idea of the overall effect.

In contrast to the still vivid red pigment used for the faces and hands in the Chalgrove mural, the Innocents' blood now has an almost black colour, suggesting a different pigment, viz. red lead oxide, and subsequent chemical alteration. For the lost fourteenth-century wall-paintings at Headington, see anon., 'The Coloured Decoration of Churches', The Builder 22 (1864) 733-34 with an attempted reconstruction of the scheme in an engraving on p. 741; also John Edwards, 'The Medieval Wall-Paintings Formerly at St Andrew's Church, Headington, Oxford', Archaeological Journal 145 (1988) 263-71, and the illustration opposite p. 168 of Mary D Lobel (ed.), History of the County of Oxford: Bullingdon Hundred, VCH, vol. 5 (London, 1957), based on drawings in the Bodleian Library, MS Gough Adds. Oxon. a 71, f. 46.

The Canterbury Tales, IV (E) ll. 2364-6, as quoted by Woolf (1972) 208 and n. 76.
and the soldiers, which might appear to unbalance the tragedy of the event. However, the mere text can never bring to life the actual visual horror that would have been already familiar to medieval viewers from the ubiquitous depictions in art of this episode from Christ's infancy, and which dramatization would have made even more tangible on stage. Moreover, those watching the mystery plays probably needed an element of comic relief to help them cope with a drama that would have had personal resonances for many in the audience; after all, few families in the Middle Ages would have been spared the experience of infant death, even though it was presented in a much more brutal fashion in the Massacre plays.

**PARALLELS TO THE MASSACRE**

The Massacre may well be the most famous story of infanticide but it is by no means the only one. In typical medieval tradition comparisons and Types were sought for this New Testament event from Christ's infancy. An early and obvious parallel is the story of Pharaoh ordering all male children of Israel killed during their sojourn in Egypt; like Christ, Moses is the one crucial child who escaped this fate and survived to become the saviour of his people. In the illuminated manuscript version of the *Speculum humanae salvationis* (Codex Cremifanensis 243, f. 16v-17) the Flight into Egypt is paralleled by a scene of Moses before Pharaoh; the Massacre itself is otherwise not shown.\(^{138}\) The same connection is also made quite clearly in the *Bible moralisée*, as can be seen in the version at the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna (Codex Vindobonensis 2554), f. 16: in the top left-hand roundel two mothers show their anguish as three armed soldiers cast their naked male children into the water to drown, while in the corresponding roundel below Herod, with his sword raised, orders his two soldiers to kill the naked Innocents in front of two mothers. The text accompanying this second roundel explains the analogue almost too perfectly: 'Ce que pharaons comanda lesenfanz de sa terre atuer por moyses oicrirre autresi senefie herode qi commanda qetuit li enfant fussent tue et detrenchi a tens qe iesu criz fu nez'.\(^{139}\) Of course, Pharaoh was not deliberately targetting Moses, as this text suggests, but simply trying to limit the numbers of the Israelites; Herod's command not just to kill the Innocents but actually to cut them into pieces is another telling addition. The story of Moses offered further parallels, with his birth being compared to the Nativity and his exposure in a basket of reeds typefying Christ in his manger.

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138 See the commentary on f. 16v-17 in Neumüller (1997) 29.
139 See the facsimile edition of Codex Vindobonensis 2554 with commentary and translation of the biblical texts by Gerald B Guest (1992, English edition London, 1995). Transl.: 'That Pharaoh commanded that the children of his land be slain in order to kill Moses signifies Herod who ordered that all the children be killed and cut into pieces at the time that Jesus Christ was born'.
In medieval tradition Herod typified the evil tyrant willing even to sacrifice innocent children in order to retain power. However, the fact that he was usually shown enthroned, sometimes with his legs crossed, and holding a drawn sword, has occasionally led to confusion as this is rather similar to the common pose for representations of kings in later medieval art, and not necessarily wicked kings. For example, despite its helpful caption of 'Sapientia' above, the illumination showing Solomon's Judgement in the Hours of Catherine of Cleves was incorrectly identified as a Massacre of the Innocents by at least one pair of authors; admitted, Solomon's seemingly aggressive pose in raising his sword while holding the surviving naked infant does resemble the more actively participating Herod, for example in the almost contemporary stained-glass Massacre panel at St Peter Mancroft church in Norwich. Notwithstanding Herod's demon-crown, an early fifteenth-century stained-glass panel of the Massacre at St Michael Spurriergate in York was apparently 'restored' to become a Judgement of Solomon.

There is another set of parallels that should not be omitted, viz. in the Massacre in the hugely popular Biblia pauperum, which survives not only in manuscript copies but also in blockbook editions, like the version of c. 1460. The central event of the Massacre is compared to two Old Testament Types, the first one being Saul ordering the killing of Ahimelech and the other priests of Nob because the former had harboured the fugitive David (1 Samuel 22:11-18); here the priests represent the Innocents, Saul signifies Herod and David stands for Christ. In fact, as the biblical account states, not only were the eighty-five priests slain but also all the animals and people of the city of Nob, including children and sucklings, although one of Ahimelech's sons managed to escape to David. The second Type is the story of queen Athaliah ordering the princes to be killed after the death of her own son Ahaziah (2 Kings 11:1) with Athaliah signifying Herod; in the Chester play of the Magi, Herod himself refers to Athaliah, 'that fell and furiose queene, that made slea all men children that of kinges blood were' (l. 333-34). This second type is particularly apt in that, just as in the Massacre, one prince and his nurse are secretly saved; this prince, Joash son of Ahaziah, afterwards becomes king, thus being a Type of Christ. The blockbook edition shows the central Massacre scene comprising the three elements of Herod giving his orders, the actual killing by a soldier armed with a sword, and a seated mother lamenting over the corpse of her

141 See Clifford Davidson and David E O'Connor, York Art: A Subject List of Extant and Lost Art Including Items Relevant to Early Drama, EDAM Reference Series 1 (Kalamazoo, 1978) 60.
142 See the annotated facsimile edition of this blockbook version of the Biblia Pauperum by Avril Henry (Aldershot, 1987) 'g', with comments on p. 62.
son on the right in the foreground; the raised hand of a second mother on the far right shows the familiar ambiguity between a gesture of appeal and defensive action. Unlike the naked infants in the Massacre, the little princes in the right-hand scene are dressed in the belted gowns of *pueri*, except for the little boy in his shift held in the arms of the crowned figure on the right, who must be the surviving prince Jehoash saved by the king's sister Jehosheba. In all three cases, monarchs act like tyrants in order to safeguard their own power but ultimately they all fail because one of their target victims manages to escape.

One may sometimes also find allusions to these Old Testament types in Massacre illuminations in books of hours. Several crucial elements occur in a Massacre scene on f. 187v of a book of hours produced at Bruges around 1450, now in the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore (MS W. 721). Here Herod watches two soldiers in armour putting two swaddled infants to the sword; one mother is seated, the other standing, but both make a grab for the soldiers' faces with their hands. The whole page is devoted to the Massacre miniature, which is surrounded by painted foliage with some penwork and featuring three (semi-)human figures; a smaller separate scene underneath the Massacre depicts the story of Saul ordering the priests to be killed, which is also one of the analogues in the *Biblia pauperum*. Similarly, a particularly bloody Massacre miniature on f. 135v of a book of hours of c. 1440 by the Burgundian Master of Guillebert de Metz (Vatican, MS Ottobonianus latinus 2919) faces an initial on f. 136 showing queen Athaliah ordering the extermination of the royal family.

The *Biblia pauperum* presented Solomon's Judgement as an Old Testament Type for Christ in the Last Judgement; the king is here shown holding his sceptre while it is a soldier with a sword who is ready to cut in half the naked infant he is holding in his left arm. It is curious to note that it is the swaddled infant lying at the king's feet that appears to be the dead child; its uncovered face shows its eyes closed, in contrast to the more lively expression on the face of the naked child. Christ is here shown in the centre of the page with on either side of him a sword instead of the more usual single Sword of Judgement and the lily of mercy. The honest mother kneeling before Solomon to plead for her child finds her parallel in the Virgin Mary interceding for the souls of the resurrected in the central scene.

John Mirk found yet another comparison in the life of St Sylvester, *viz.* the story of the emperor Constantine, who out of pity for the lamenting mothers

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143 Illustrated in Maurits Smeyers, *Vlaamse miniatures van de 8ste tot het midden van de 16de eeuw: de middeleeuwse wereld op perkament* (Louvain, 1998) p. 263, plate 42.
144 See Eberhard König and Gabriele Bartz, *Das Stundenbuch: Perlen der Buchkunst - die Gattung in Handschriften der Vaticana* (Stuttgart/Zürich, 1998) pl. 100.
renounced his plan to seek a cure for his leprosy by bathing in the blood of three thousand children; the emperor was cured by St Sylvester in reward for his mercy.\textsuperscript{146} There are also echoes of the Massacre of the Innocents in the 'Tale of King Arthur' in Malory's \textit{Morte Darthur}. After Arthur has slept with his unknown half-sister, the wife of king Lott, he learns from Merlin that 'ye have lyene by youre syster and on hir ye have gotyn a childe that shall destroy you and all the knyghtes of youre realme'.\textsuperscript{147} Although Caxton did not think it worthwhile to inform the reader of his 1485 printed edition of this episode in his rubrics, he did describe its sequel in quite a matter-of-fact way in his last rubric of the book: 'How al the chyldren were sente fore that were borne on May day, and how Mordred was saved'.\textsuperscript{148} Malory himself ended this story in his first book in the same factual tone before introducing the subject of the next book:

\begin{quote}
Than kynge Arthure lette sende for all the children that were borne in May-day, begotyn of lordis and borne of ladyes; for Merlyon tolde kynge Arthure that he that sholde destroy hym and all the londe sholde be borne on May-day. Wherefore he sente for hem all in payne of dethe, and so there were founde many lordis sonnys and many knyghtes sonnes, and all were sente unto the kynge. And so was Mordred sente by kynge Lottis wyff. And all were putte in a shyppe to the se; and some were four wekis olde and som lesse. And so by fortune the shyppe drove unto a castelle, and was all to-ryven and destroyed the moste party, save that Mordred was cast up, and a good man founde hym, and fostird hym tylle he was fourtene yere of age, and than brought hym to the courte, as hit rehersith aftirward and towarde the ende of the MORTE ARTHURE.

So, many lordys and barownes of thys realme were displeased for hir children were so loste; and many putte the wyght on Merlion more than o[n] Arthure. So what for drede and for love, they helde their pece.\textsuperscript{149}
\end{quote}

Malory was vague as to whether Arthur ever intended the children's death or merely wanted them sent far way. However, we are specifically informed that the targetted victim was born on May Day and it seems that Arthur, like Herod before him, is not willing to take any risk for he does not confine himself to children born on that day only: 'some were four wekis olde and som lesse'. Mordred, like Christ, is the one who got away, but in his case only to destroy Arthur's already tarnished dream of a peaceful and justly ruled kingdom.

\textbf{THE IMPACT OF THE MASSACRE}

In her book on subjects in the art of the West Riding of Yorkshire in relation to medieval drama, Barbara Palmer remarked that, notwithstanding the far-flung character of her chosen area, 'county geography does not seem to have been an

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[146]{Mirk's conclusion in his homily on the Innocents, in Erbe (1905) 37.}
\footnotetext[147]{Vinaver (1967) vol. 1, book I, 44.}
\footnotetext[148]{Vinaver (1967) vol. 1, 6, rubric to chapter 27.}
\footnotetext[149]{Vinaver (1967) vol. 1, book I, 55-56.}
\end{footnotes}
impediment to a common culture'. Of course, it would be ludicrous to claim that the examples discussed in this chapter point to a common culture in areas as far apart as Freising and York. However, the huge popularity of the story of the Massacre, as shown by the wide variety of representations in art as well as in literature and drama, is evidence not just of a common interest in the stories surrounding Christ's infancy but in the universally felt tragedy of infants brutally killed and their mothers' grief.

The particular relevance of the story of the Holy Innocents for real-life mothers is especially obvious in a tomb which, albeit outside the geographical range of this dissertation, should not be overlooked. When the Infanta Blanca of Nájera died in 1156, probably from complications after having given birth to the future king Alphonso VIII of Castile the year before, her husband Sancho of Castile commissioned a sarcophagus, the splendidly carved lid of which can still be seen at Nájera.151 When one realizes that childbirth was the cause of Blanca's death, the reliefs on her tomb seem astonishingly appropriate albeit highly exceptional: not only is her own deathbed shown in a way that resembles both a childbirth scene and the Dormition of the Virgin, but the other side of her tomb shows the Adoration of the Magi, the Massacre of the Innocents including mourning mothers, and the Judgement of Solomon - all three biblical stories involving children and mothers. In fact, the posture of Solomon holding both naked infants upside down by their feet while raising his sword looks extremely threatening and rather Herod-like. The iconography may have been exceptional yet there is no doubt that the sarcophagus was specifically designed as a monument for a woman and mother.

Religious imagery could have a very powerful impact; Margery Kempe's uncontrollable tears at beholding an image of Our Lady of Pity at Norwich may have been an extreme example of late-medieval lay piety, but they do illustrate the often powerful emotions that such imagery could elicit.152 The Virgin mourning her dead son as presented in the Pietà, and the image of the typical Bethlehem mother grieving over her child, were two popular icons of maternal grief in medieval culture, albeit that their appeal does not necessarily tell us much about mother-child relations in everyday life; despite her tears over the Norwich Pietà and her concern for the swaddled Christ child, Margery Kempe does not come across as the perfect medieval mother. However, there was a firm belief in an ideal

152 See Davidson (1977) 12 and 103.
standard of natural maternal behaviour, which images of the Virgin or the Massacre helped to reinforce. Huizinga already wrote of the 'extreme excitability of the medieval soul' that official historical documents cannot really convey; for this we have to study the strongly expressed emotions presented in medieval drama and the vivid depictions of violence in the art of the period as a different type of historical evidence.

The impact of the story of the massacred Innocents was huge, indeed, and not just on mothers. It has already been mentioned that medieval child-martyrs were often compared to the (usually much younger) Innocents; this may explain the prominence of Herod and the Massacre among the vault-bosses at Norwich Cathedral, which housed the remains of the child-martyr St William. When some of the later chroniclers wrote about the so-called 'Children's Crusade' of 1212, they regarded these pueri as 'new Innocents' even though the participants of this crusade are now thought to have been anything but children in the way they have been traditionally presented. According to the monk Alberic (Aubrey) of Trois-Fontaines, one of the major contributors to the medieval myth of the 'Children's Crusade', the bodies of some of the children supposedly killed in a shipwreck at the 'island of St Peter-at-the-Rock, which is called Recluse' were buried at a church of the 'New Innocents' built there at the command of Gregory IX; although unconfirmed and considered unreliable, this claim yet shows the status of the Innocents as the standard for comparison with other would-be child-martyrs, even when these were obviously older. In fact, the Bethlehem Massacre was used on at least two occasions to illustrate the horror of another historical event. First of all, there was the presumed murder in 1483 of Edward IV's sons, the 'Princes in the Tower', which subsequently invoked the analogy of the Innocents. Secondly, in the Sechsische Chronica of 1588, a print of the Massacre of the Innocents featured prominently in the description of the 1572 massacre of St Bartholomew in Paris.

The defenceless Innocents may have been easy for armed soldiers to kill yet Herod's attempt to retain power by destroying the child-king Christ almost reads like the losing battle of old age versus youth; Philippa Tristram hinted at this when she chose to read Herod's lament after hearing of the death of his own son in the

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155 I am grateful for Professor John Shinners of St Mary's College, Notre Dame (Indiana), and Dr Gary Dickson, University of Edinburgh, for this information.
Massacre in ll. 418-24 of the Chester play as a transformation of the king into a figure of Age, and as such a fall from his earlier Pride of Life in the N-Town play (ll. 5-11). The Massacre was ultimately a failure for Herod because of Christ's escape, but for the Innocents it meant an immediate place in Heaven as martyrs; this is the blessed fate of the Innocents described by Ælfric in his homily and visualized in the liturgical drama from Fleury. This final reward is also shown on the boss in the north-transept vault at Norwich Cathedral, where a small group of devout naked Innocents are welcomed by a host of angels, who are all clearly taller; these Innocents with their long hair and plump bodies look very much like a compromise between infants and Ælfric's full-grown elect.

Yet the Innocents were first and foremost infants, and the English mystery plays emphasize this by referring to the Innocents as swaddled children: 'alle knave childir kepte in clowte' (York, l. 152), 'these congeons in there clowtes' (Chester, l. 209), and 'tho that lygys in swedyll-clowte' (Towneley, ll. 449-50). Should this, however, be read as simply a general way of referring to children of infant age or an actual indication as to how the Innocents were presented on stage? Their nudity, as much as their occasional swaddled state or the presence of cradles, epitomizes their status as infants in accordance with the traditional representation of this first Age of Man, as discussed in the previous chapter. Moreover, there are specific references in the English mystery plays to the nature of the Innocents: the N-town Herod refers to the typical infant with the word 'pap-hawk' (l. 11), i.e. a child that is still being suckled by its mother or nurse. In fact, it is the villains of the Chester play who mention that other, less attractive aspect of babies when calling them 'dyrtie-arses' and 'a shitten-arsed shrowe' (ll. 143 and 157, resp.). Like real children of that age, the Innocents are presented as utterly dependent, unable to plead for their lives or flee the scene, as one Digby mother points out: 'Our yong children, that can no sucour but crie' (l. 299).

In this light, the repeated macabre joke made by the second soldier in the Chester play acquires an additional meaning:

Dame, thy sonne, in good faye,  
hee must of me learne a playe:  
hee must hopp, or I goe awaye,  
upon my speare ende.  (ll. 321-24)

158 The glossary in vol. 2 of the EETS edition of the Chester Mystery Cycle, s.s. 9 (1986), actually gives the more general translation 'baby-clothes' for 'clowtes' in this instance, with 'rags' as the translation in 'and kyll them all to clowetes!' in l. 292. One might wonder whether the latter 'clowetes' is intended as a punning reference to the use of dummies on stage here; cf. the reference to 'popeys' in the N-Town play (l. 11), explained in the commentary in the 1991 EETS edition of the N-Town play, vol. 2, 477 as 'both an ironic term of endearment for children and an anticipation of the probable use of dolls in staging the Slaughter'. See also Oosterwijk (1997a).
[...] 
Dame, shewe thou me thy child there;  
hee must hopp upon my speare.  
And hit any pintell [penis] beare,  
I must teach him a playe.  (ll. 361-64)

The image of Innocents' bodies impaled on swords or spears occurs frequently in medieval art, as we have seen. On f. 4 of the illuminated Bodleian manuscript of the apocryphal Infancy of Christ (MS Selden Supra 38, I), the corpse of a spitted Innocent is actually presented to Herod by one of the soldiers. This same motif occurs in the St Peter Mancroft glass and in medieval wall-paintings at Chalgrove, Headington and Risby (Suffolk). Clearly part of popular tradition, these images may well be an indication of how medieval audiences would have expected to see the Massacre acted out on stage in the mystery plays. It was obviously a favourite device in medieval drama; the Chester stage directions specify 'Tunc Miles trasfodiet primum puerum et super lancea accipiet'. This matches the first N-Town soldier's boast 'Upon my spere / A gerle [male child] I bere' (ll. 109-10) when returning to Herod in triumph with an infant still impaled on his spear; the children's bodies are actually turned into hunting trophies, 'boys sprawlyd at my sperys hende' (l. 220). This is without a doubt most vividly illustrated in a miniature from a twelfth-century picture bible from the Rhine or Meuse region, which shows one soldier holding three infants by the feet to run them through all together with his sword, and a second soldier triumphantly carrying back to Herod his sword on which the bodies of five infants have been skewered.

The jesting of the Chester soldier adds to the horror of the Massacre scene; the transmutation of childish play into child murder is gruesome but quite effective. However, the soldier's actual words are significant: infants were traditionally incapable of walking yet he will teach this Innocent a play, viz. to 'hoppe' or dance on his spear. The joke is reminiscent of the danse macabre, a new theme which emerged in the late fourteenth century and which showed Death summoning men of all classes and professions to his Dance. Being one of the most vulnerable members of society, and having been depicted as an archetypal victim for centuries, it is small wonder that the infant should also take its place in the Dance of Death.

159 The cycle of the Infancy of Christ on the north wall of the nave at St Giles' church in Risby, Suffolk, is said to date from ca. 1200 or the early thirteenth century; see E Clive Rouse, 'Wall Paintings in Risby Church', Suffolk Institute of Archaeology 26 (1955) 27-34. Edwards (1988) 265, quoted another source suggesting that the impaled child 'probably is Herod's own child, accidentally slain, according to one account'. This may, in fact, be an echo from one of the medieval historical writers; it also occurs in the Chester play, in which Herod learns from one of the women that his own son is among the slain.

160 Loose leaf MS 32 B31 C.H9 2,B, verso, in the Hirsch collection; see Georg Swarzenski, Die illuminierten Handschriften und Einzelminiaturen des Mittelalters und der Renaissance in Frankfurter Besitz (Frankfurt am Main, 1929) 16 and pl. XI.
Chapter 5. DEATH AND THE INFANT:

"Nw mus ich tanczen vnd kan noch nicht gan"

Thinke, pou haddest beginninge
Qwhen you were ibore;
And bot you mak god endinge
Pi sowle is forlore.1

The Massacre of the Innocents may present an extreme event yet its popularity as a
theme is indicative of a medieval preoccupation with infant death. In the Middle
Ages, and well into the twentieth century, (infant) mortality meant that life could
never be taken for granted. A report on the human bones found during excavations
of the medieval cemetery at Stonor in Oxfordshire, which was probably in use from
the early twelfth to the fifteenth century, concluded:

The high proportion of infants and juveniles is not unexpected in a fairly
primitive society such as this. [...] The highest numbers of them died as infants
and then the death rate was at a lower, but fairly constant rate until they were
aged about 10. If they survived that long they stood a good chance of reaching
adulthood.2

Not only might parents expect to see some of their offspring die and young people
lose siblings, but children themselves were inevitably made far more aware of their
own mortality than their counterparts in the modern western world. In Chaucer's
Canterbury Tales the Pardoner relates in his tale how the three riotous youths are
warned about Death by the boy who serves them in the tavern:

Beeth redy for to meeete hym everemoore;
Thus taughte me my dame ... (ll. 683-84)

Of course, as some authors have pointed out, the crucial word is 'meet': a
metaphor which may, however, be taken literally as an actual encounter.3 Despite

1 From the English morality play The Pride of Life in Davis (1970) ll. 183-86.
The Stonor excavations have not yet been published: I am grateful to Dr Jenny Wakely of the
Department of Pre-Clinical Sciences, University of Leicester, for lending me a copy of this report.
3 See, for example, Philippa Tristram, "Olde Stories Longe Tyme Agoon": Death and the
Audience of Chaucer's Pardoner', in: Herman Braet and Werner Verbeke (eds), Death in the Middle
Ages, Medieaevalia Lovaniensia series I, studia IX (Louvain, 1983) 181: 'No doubt his mother, in
warning her son to be ever-prepared to meet his end, meant no more than she said: but the
metaphor contained in the word 'meet' suggests to the childish mind an encounter with an actual
adversary'.
working in a tavern, the boy is clearly still very much a child to be thus quoting his mother's words.

This little episode is, of course, very much in line with exempla used by medieval preachers although these are usually aimed at parents who might suffer the loss of a child as a punishment for their sins; young children in the infantia stage were often considered too young to comprehend such lessons although they would still experience the reality of death in their environment.\(^4\) The importance was, of course, a spiritual preparedness but the story illustrates both a medieval awareness of how children, too, should be aware of the threat of omnipresent death and the existence of the idea that one may literally encounter Death in the midst of life - just as every member of society was to find in the soon popular theme of the Dance of Death. However, there had been sufficient calamities throughout history to teach people just that.

**Calamities and Mortality**

Death was, indeed, omnipresent in medieval life; there were constant reminders of it in the imagery of the Crucifixion, saints' martyrdoms or the Massacre in churches and elsewhere, and also the conspicuous presence among the living of cemeteries and the memorials for the more affluent deceased. In everyday existence it did not take a pestilence to kill off people in the midst of life when childbirth or simple accidents could so easily prove fatal. In fact, infants were not always mentioned as victims of epidemics when it was the deaths of full-grown adults in the prime of life that struck contemporaries as so much more unexpected and tragic. Guillaume de Nangis, the chronicler who described the first occurrence of the Black Death in Paris, may have remarked that it was the young and strong who died rather than the old and weak, but statistically it is usually the weakest of society - the very young and the very old - who suffer the most casualties in epidemics.\(^5\) One modern author explained this anomaly in Guillaume's account thus:

> The position is, of course, complicated by the tendency of the old to die from other causes without a major epidemic to speed them on their way, but, even after allowing for this, the young and fit, as was to be expected, proved the more likely to resist the disease. The death of a strong young man is naturally more shocking and more likely to be remembered: to this, perhaps, is due the

\(^4\) Jenny Swanson, 'Childhood and Childrearing in *ad status* Sermons by Later Thirteenth Century Friars', *Journal of Medieval History* 16 (1990) 317, mentions the example of the Franciscan scholar John of Wales, whose chapter on infantia in his work *Communiloquium* 'was naturally directed towards parents, as he clearly realised that under-sevens would be unlikely to gain much from preaching'. Also Orme (1994) 564-66.

conviction on the part of certain chroniclers that his chances of death were unfairly high.6

Although he does not mention them, infants, like the old, also had a tendency to die from other causes.

Whereas one might expect such high mortality rates to be followed by a surge in the birth rate, at least one English chronicler claimed that most women who survived this first plague remained barren for many years while those who did conceive generally died in childbirth along with their babies.7 Whether this view is correct or not, it conjures up an image of continuing bleakness in which omnipresent death has an aftermath of both barrenness and new life mercilessly extinguished as soon as it emerges. Successive outbreaks of the Black Death hit different age groups and in the second epidemic of 1361 most English sources mention that children and adolescents were its particular victims;8 according to the anonymous chronicler from the Cistercian abbey of Louth Park in Lincolnshire, the 1361 outbreak was therefore commonly called the 'pestilentia puerorum'.9 Some preachers actually argued that the deaths of innocent children were intended by God as a punishment for their parents' sins and as such a lesson for their families and friends: Thomas Brinton, bishop of Rochester, thus mentioned in a 1375 sermon 'the example of the deaths of children who would have followed the sins of their parents had they lived and whom God mercifully took, so that by the death of the body they avoided the eternal punishment which they would have earned had they lived'.10

Of course, there were famines, epidemics, wars and other disasters long before the calamitous plague first struck the west in the period 1347-49, and young children were always likely victims of such events. In fact, many chroniclers

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6 Ziegler (1984) 79. Infants again remain unnoticed in the discussion (p. 169) of the analysis of 505 post-mortem inquisitions, where this conclusion is reached: 'Tradition does seem to be right, however, in maintaining that the children were spared. Only 7 per cent died of those between six and ten and 15 per cent between eleven and fifteen.'

7 Quoted in translation from the *Eulogium Historiarum sive Temporis*, written at Malmesbury Abbey in the 1350s, by Rosemary Horrox (ed.), *The Black Death*, Manchester Medieval Sources series (Manchester, 1994) no. 13, 64.

8 See Horrox (1994) 11, who explained that this characteristic explains the relatively low profile of the second outbreak in non-chronicle sources such as rentals and court rolls: 'Perhaps contemporaries found it less disruptive for the same reason, although this is not to belittle the grief it caused'. Excerpts quoted by Horrox on the death rate amongst children in the 1361 outbreak include Henry Knighton's chronicle written at Leicester in the early 1390s and the northern Anonimalle Chronicle: see Horrox, no. 25, 85-86. The Anonimalle chronicler wrote that the third pestilence in 1369 and the fourth in 1378 also proved particularly fatal to children; see Horrox, 88, nos. 26a and 27a.

9 Horrox (1994) no. 25e, based on E Venables (ed.), *Chronicon Abbatiae de Parco Luda*: *The Chronicle of Louth Park Abbey* (Horncastle, 1891) 40-41; I am not sure whether this should be translated as 'children's pestilence', or rather as 'boys' pestilence as Venables and Horrox have done.

10 Horrox (1994) 11, and 146, no. 49.
specifically used child deaths to illustrate the horror of these calamities to such an extent that the image of parents eating their own children became a stock phrase to describe a true famine, as Ralph Glaber did in his chronicle from the first half of the eleventh century to describe a famine around the year 1000:

In those days also, in many regions, the horrible famine compelled men to make their food not only of unclean beast and creeping things, but even of men's, women's, and children's flesh, without regard even of kindred; for so fierce waxed this hunger that grown-up sons devoured their mothers, and mothers, forgetting their maternal love, ate their babies.11

The love between parents and children, and particularly that of mothers for their infants, was such an accepted fact that an account of this unnatural behaviour served to epitomize the most extreme type of famine. Much more moving still is the often quoted description in the Historiae Francorum by the sixth-century bishop (and saint) Gregory of Tours of the dysentery epidemic in the year 580:

The epidemic began in the month of August. It attacked young children first of all and to them it was fatal: and so we lost our little ones, who were so dear to us and sweet, whom we had cherished in our bosoms and dandled in our arms, whom we had fed and nurtured with such loving care. As I write I wipe away my tears and repeat once more the words of Job the blessed: 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; as it hath pleased the Lord, so is it come to pass. Blessed be the name of the Lord, world without end.'12

The theme of infant and child mortality through famine and pestilence thus has quite a respectable history, whatever medieval inquests and modern statistics may suggest.

In art, there is the illumination of St Gregory the Great's plague procession of 590 in Rome on f. 71v–72 of the Duke of Berry's Très Riches Heures, originally designed by the Limbourg brothers but only finished by Jean Colombe about half a century later in c. 1465; supposedly a scene from history but with great contemporary relevance when it was first drawn, it shows two clerics and a child collapse while a mother further down the line also appears to succumb, two small children clinging to her skirts.13 A German panel painting of 1424, designed for the altar of St Cosmas (patron saint of physicians) in Göttingen, depicts a group of nineteen corpses struck down by plague arrows, of which five small figures appear

11 Quoted by Coulton (1928) vol. 1, 3. The extreme horror of epidemics was also often illustrated through accounts of the unnatural behaviour of parents and children refusing to visit or nurse each other, e.g. in John of Fordun's Scotichronicon or in the prologue of Boccaccio's Decamerone.

12 The History of the Franks, transl. Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth, 1974) V.34, 296.

to be children. It seems, then, that whereas (modern) historians may be inclined to overlook infants when studying the fatalities from such disasters, in medieval culture infants and young children were often presented as particularly typical and sad losses or otherwise badly affected by the death of parents. Although the illumination in the Très Riches Heures is obviously not a Dance of Death, there are interesting parallels in that the procession includes all different classes of society, from ordinary men and mothers with children, clerics and cardinals up to the pope himself. However, before embarking on the Dance of Death proper, it may be useful to look at the next step after death: burial.

INFANT BURIAL
Death may have been the great equalizer that reduced people of all ranks to the same humble fate yet, as noted earlier, it is generally only adults who make it into the history books and statistics; infants were already quite vulnerable and most of them simply passed away unnoticed by history, not yet playing a role of their own in medieval society and thus not worth recording. Not only have medieval child tombs been largely ignored but some historians have claimed that even the place and method of child burial was held of no importance. Although Ariès' confused claims about the presumed absence of children on medieval tomb monuments were blatantly incorrect, in his subsequent 1977 book L'homme devant la mort he again concentrated on the post-medieval era while making rather sweeping statements about earlier periods: 'The bodies of the poor and of the young children of the rich, who were treated like the poor, were sewn into shrouds made of cheap sacking and thrown into big, common graves'. Nowhere in this book does Ariès refer to medieval child monuments and in his 1983 illustrated addition Images de l'homme devant la mort there is only a curt assertion almost at the very end of the book to the effect that 'prior to the fifteenth century, children's tombs either did not exist or were very rare. In the seventeenth century, they were still rare and crude. But in the nineteenth century, the cemeteries were taken over by children'.

14 Now in the Niedersachsische Landesgalerie, Hannover; the painting features in the illustrated edition of Ziegler (Godalming, 1998) colour pl. 1.  
16 Translated as Images of Man and Death (Cambridge/London, 1985) 247, 252. One sentence on p. 84 serves to inform us that 'children's portraits appeared in the sixteenth century', even though among the examples given the portrait of Charles Orland by the Master of Moulins actually dates from 1494. The detail of a relief from the tomb of St Louis' son Louis of France (d. 1260) in pl. 206 only serves to show the use of censers beneath his bier. However, it is the infant in its cradle that was chosen to illustrate the danse macabre mural at Meslay-le-Grenet (Eure-et-Loire) in pl. 233. Similarly, Daniell (1998) 43, citing as his authority John Page-Phillips, Children on Brasess (London, 1970) 9-15, claimed that 'it was very rare for a child to be portrayed in funeral art or on memorial brasses before the early fifteenth century'. 
Admittedly, genealogical lists and family histories often omit mention of such short-lived members and few infants were commemorated with monuments. Those who were honoured with tomb effigies were not necessarily represented as infants or even children but often appeared much older, rather like adolescents or even adults, albeit often in miniature size. Some authors have tried to explain the discrepancy between actual and depicted age as an attempt to portray the deceased child as they might have become had they but lived; however, as we saw earlier, the tombs of the French king Louis IX's infant children Jean and Blanche suggest a possible connection with the images of youth in the Ages of Man and with the vir perfectus at the Resurrection. Similar iconography can be seen in two Gaignières drawings of the tomb slabs at Barbeau Abbey of Jean and Thibaut de Sancerre, twin brothers who drowned around 1236 while swimming in the river; the emotional inscription leaves it unclear how old they were - certainly much older than little prince Jean - but they may equally have been children or adolescents.17

While some royal and noble offspring were commemorated either through their own tombs or, more commonly from the fourteenth century onwards, as weepers on their parents' monuments, most ordinary children were not so fortunate and rarely left behind any trace of their existence; the Dreamer's dead infant daughter in Pearl is simply buried in the 'moldez dunne' of an 'erber grene'.18 The best that archaeologists may turn up are some fragile bones as infant remains are particularly apt to decay. However, archaeological evidence from excavations in some early cemeteries in England does suggest that deceased infants often occupied a special place in a separate section close to the church wall at the east end in what are termed 'eaves-drip' burials; these can be found in the Anglo-Saxon churchyard excavated at Raunds Furnells in Northamptonshire.19 This almost exclusive concentration of infant burials in what is interpreted as the most favourite site for burial, as close as possible to the church and thus likely to receive water falling from the church roof, has been found in other early medieval churchyards and suggests the special place that (deceased) infants occupied in their society.20

18 Pearl, in Andrew and Waldron (1978) ll. 30 and 38, respectively: the 'dark brown earth' of a 'green garden', i.e. a grave in a churchyard.
20 Boddington et al. (1996) 69: 'The most distinctively treated are the infants, who from sometime around the turn of the eleventh century were buried close to the church walls in the so-called 'eaves-drip' position. This pattern of burial was not uncommon at the very end of the Anglo-Saxon and at the beginning of the post-Conquest period. [...] Rather than following the pattern of earlier periods, when infants were often not given proper burial, the Furnells evidence indicates considerable care being extended to the newborn.' Examples of other such burials are mentioned at St Guthlac's, Hereford; Castle Bailey, Norwich; and The Hirsel, Berwickshire. Daniell (1998) further mentioned such clusters at Whitborn, Jarrow, Winchester and Hartlepool.
Although this 'eaves-drip' type of burial seems to have died out in England after the Conquest, archaeological evidence suggests that the east or west ends of churches often remained the preferred area for infant burials. A similar proximity of child burials to churches, i.e. in highly favoured positions, has been observed by archaeologists excavating medieval cemeteries across France. Daniell concluded in his study of medieval burial in England that 'zoning of burials is relatively common, especially in the case of child burials'. The evidence so far contradicts Ariès' claim that it was the innovative seventeenth-century priest who 'had the idea of providing a special place for the burial of small children, those "little angels"'. Further excavations are likely to increase our knowledge of child burial during the medieval period, even though there are likely to have been wide variations in place and method both regionally and through time. Infant burials are particularly vital for our understanding in the light of claims about infanticide and the idea that unbaptized babies could not be buried in hallowed ground; Daniell mentioned that 'in medieval cemeteries it is not unusual to find a foetus with a female skeleton, either still in the womb or beside/on top of the body'; the example at the Augustinian friary in Hull of a woman buried in a coffin with her child buried in a tiny coffin by her leg is reminiscent of the design of the tomb slab at Welby. However, the finds so far are sometimes hard to interpret and Daniell also added 'that infants - especially unbaptized infants - were buried elsewhere is a stronger possibility'. As it is not always possible for archaeologists to excavate the whole area of a medieval cemetery, there is always a chance that any specially designated burial site for infants may be missed completely. However, the picture so far suggests that infants and children were buried with care, rather than disposed of with indifference. The fact that a royal licence had to be given in 1398 to enclose the cathedral cemetery in Hereford, partly to stop the 'secret burials of unbaptized

21 Daniell (1998) 128, who mentions that 17 out of 20 infant burials at Taunton were found at the western end, with similar (but scant) findings at St Margaret's in Combusto, Norwich.
22 See Riché and Alexandre-Bidon (1994) 85ff, but esp. 88; apparently some one hundred children were found buried in the choir of the church of Saint-Lucien at La Courneuve while at Sainte-Croix in the northern French Alps children were buried along the lateral walls of the church. At the church of Saint-Barthélemy at Saint-Denis, children were also interred in similar eaves-drip burials, 'sous la gouttière, c'est-à-dire sous l'eau de pluie sacrée pour avoir ruisselé sur le toit de l'église', as explained by Riché and Alexandre-Bidon; unfortunately, the authors simply mention the burial of 'enfants' without distinguishing between infants and older children or mentioning periods of burial.
infants', as mentioned earlier, shows that medieval parents were greatly concerned about proper burial of their children.27

THE DANCE OF DEATH AND ITS PRECURSORS

Although death was always very much present in medieval life, there is no denying that the impact of the Black Death was dramatic. People apparently became even more conscious of their own mortality and it seems that, in the wake of the first outbreak of the plague, folk dances called 'the Death Dance' or 'the Dance of the Dead' became popular all over fourteenth-century Europe and continued thus for another three centuries or so.28

In the fifteenth century the most popular burial place in Paris was the Franciscan cemetery of the Holy Innocents, not just as a burial site but also as a place where one might stroll around, listen to sermons, and buy snacks or books from one of the many stalls within its grounds;29 in the later fifteenth century the church was honoured with a relic of a 'whole innocent' presented by Louis XI, as mentioned in chapter 4. From the fourteenth century on, however, it was not a permanent resting place but one where the problem of overcrowding necessitated the disinterment of the remains of rich and poor alike, which were instead transferred to charnel houses.30 As if to remind visitors even further of this ultimate equality, in 1424-25 the cemetery of the Innocents was decorated with a now lost mural depicting a theme that had emerged in the previous century and was to achieve immense popularity: the danse macabre or Dance of Death.

The history of the danse macabre is hard to trace. Although the Parisian mural was lost centuries ago, it is still regarded by many as the most influential and sometimes discussed as the earliest of an enduring tradition, notwithstanding its highly accomplished style for such a supposed prototype. Of course, medieval artists had been preoccupied with images of Death and the theme of memento mori prior to 1424. More than half a century before the outbreak of the Plague and even longer before the Dance of Death emerged as a theme, Death already occurred as a

27 Daniell (1998) 127, followed by a discussion of twenty-four infant burials, mostly in small and shallow graves, at Castle Green in Hereford, which may be evidence of the enforced interment of unbaptized infants outside the enclosed cathedral cemetery.

28 Phoebe S Spinrad, The Summons of Death on the Medieval and Renaissance English Stage (Columbus, 1987) 6; Florence Warren, The Dance of Death, edited from Mss. Ellesmere 26/A.13 and B.M. Lansdowne 699, collated with the other extant Mss., EETS, o.s. 181 (London, 1931) xi-xv. However, see also below for an earlier performance of a possible type of 'Death Dance' at a Scottish royal wedding at Jedburgh in 1285.

29 Gert Kaiser (ed.), Der tanzende Tod: Mittelalterliche Totentänze (Frankfurt am Main, 1983) 70-73, quoting in translation a fragment from Le Testament by the fifteenth-century poet François Villon (born in Paris in 1431) which describes the scene at Les Innocents.

30 James M Clark, The Dance of Death in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (Glasgow, 1950) 22.
black-faced terror chasing young and old alike in Jean de Meun’s continuation of the Roman de la Rose of c. 1277:

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\text{Mort, qui de nair le vis a taint, queurt apr\'es tant qu'el les ataint, si qu'il a trop fiere chace}. \ (II 4, ll. 15915-17)\]

Despite this ultimately always successful chase, Nature in the end proves stronger in that for every victim that Death manages to kill, more still escape, at least for the time being, so that the species continues. It is interesting to note the colour of Death since this blackness - suggesting evil and decay - was to become a recurring feature. A century later, the Middle-English poem Death and Liffe of the late fourteenth century describes 'Dame Death' as a horrifying old hag armed with a mace and darts with which she strikes all classes and ages of society, including infants: 'Crism-children in their cradle shee craddantly [cowardly] dighteth'.

By this time, the theme of the living being accosted by the dead had become quite popular in medieval art. The story of the encounter between the Three Living and the Three Dead is told in a number of Middle-French poems, such as the thirteenth-century Le dit des trois morts et trois vifs. It can be found in many wall-paintings from as early as the fourteenth century, as in the partly lost version at Longthorpe Tower near Peterborough, where the three decaying corpses are also characterized by their blackish colour. On f. 127 of the early fourteenth-century De Lisle Psalter, three elegant young kings are faced by three brown skeletal corpses with a short Middle-English text above giving the kings' first reactions and an Anglo-French dialogue between the two groups accompanying the scene below; this latter text is an abridged version of the French poem Le dit des trois morts et trois vifs, which was itself sometimes illustrated. However, this theme is quite different from the later danse macabre in contrasting human pride in the guise of three elegant young kings and the ultimate grisly fate of all mankind; in the De Lisle Psalter the foremost of the three kings with a falcon on his wrist particularly resembles the epitome of human perfection in depictions of the Ages of Man - rather like the young and strong that Guillaume de Nangis in Paris claimed to have

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31 Félix Lecoy (ed.), Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. Le Roman de la Rose, Les Classiques Français du Moyen Age (Paris, 1966) vol. 2. Transl.: Death, who has coloured her face black, runs after them until she catches up with them; this is a very cruel hunt. It should be noted that death - la Mort - is presented here as female.


33 Clark (1950) 95, mentions four versions by Baudouin de Condé, Nicholas de Margival and two anonymous authors. For other early treatments in French literature of the theme of Death and society, see also Jean Batany, 'Une image en négatif du fonctionnalisme social: les Danses Macabre', in Jane H M Taylor (ed.), Dies Illa: Death in the Middle Ages (Proceedings of the 1983 Manchester Colloquium), Vinaver Studies in French 1 (Liverpool, 1984) 15-27.

34 Sandler (1983) 42, pt. 5 and figs. 52-55.
been the most common victims of the Black Death on its first outbreak in Paris. In 1408 Jean, Duke of Berry, commissioned a sculpted version of the theme of the Three Living and the Three Dead to decorate the portal of the church of Les Innocents in Paris, thus almost providing an introduction for the Dance of Death that was to be painted there sixteen years later.35

The theme of the Three Living and the Three Dead is distinct from the later *danse macabre* as the three corpses do not represent Death itself, but merely the dead, with a clear message of the still familiar reminder 'hodie mihi, cras tibi'. When it comes to encounters with Death himself, the *danse macabre* may have been preceded by possibly the grimmest depiction of Death and the infant. Around 1300 the German poet Hugo von Trimberg composed his long didactic poem *Der Renner*, of which a number of illuminated versions survive.36 Manuscript Vossius G.G.F. 4 in the Leiden University Library is one of these, dating from c. 1400; a brightly coloured illumination on f. 247v illustrates the tale of how an unknown guest is asked to act as godfather for a baby born during the night - after the ceremony the willing guest turns out to be Death himself. In the Leiden manuscript the father stands on the far left watching his child being immersed in the font by the priest while Death with a fluttering band across his skull-like head stands ominously in their midst behind the font, holding out what may be the baby's baptismal chrysom cloth. For all its apparently telling symbolism, however, the rest of the tale proves to be not about the impact of Death's presence on the newborn child but about the father's attempt to safeguard his own life from Death in the years to come. The fact that *Der Renner*’s author is not interested in informing his readers of the infant’s ultimate fate is rather curious in view of the prominently illuminated baptismal scene, and the impression remains that for infants Death was never far away.

THE DANCE OF DEATH IN TEXT AND IMAGE

The genesis of the *danse macabre* itself is quite obscure; in fact, the very origin of the term 'macabre' is still a matter of debate. The earliest mention of it is in the poem *Le respite de mort*, written in or soon after 1376 by the French poet Jean

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35 Warren (1931) xvii; Binski (1996) 140.
36 See Bruno Müller, 'Die illustrierte Renner-Handschrift in der Bibliotheca Bodmeriana in Cologny-Genf (Hs. CG) im Vergleich mit den sonst erhaltenen bebilderten Renner-Handschriften', *Bericht des historischen Vereins Bamberg* 112 (1976) 77-160, esp. 152-53 where other versions are discussed containing similar miniatures with captions like 'hier tofft man ain kind vnd der tod wirt gefatter' (Frankfurt, Stadt- und Universitätsbibliothek MS germ. quart. 6, f. 190v) and 'Da sol ein pfaff ein chind tawffen vnd der tod das leben vnd tregt ein segens auff dem ruck vnd des chinds vatter stet auch da pey' (MS CG Codex Bodmer 91, f. 186). The illumination of this scene in the Leiden manuscript is shown and discussed as one of the most telling illustrations of infant mortality by Arnold (1980) 28-29.
Lefèvre after his recovery from a serious illness; the poem contains the line 'Je fis de macabre la danse'.

Although it is unclear what exactly the poet meant by this, he clearly felt confident that the readers in his own time would understand the term. In fact, this is also the term used in the *Journal d'un Bourgeois de Paris* to describe the mural at Les Innocents: 'Item l'an 1424 fut faicte la Dance Macabre aux SS. Innocenz et fut commencee environ le moys d'aoust et achevee en Karesme ensuivant'.

Yet there is still no consensus as to the origin of the word *macabre*, which has been explained by some as derived from the Arabic *maqabir* (graves) whereas others have proposed etymological explanations ranging from the Latin *maxcresco* (to grow thin) to Greek μακαρίος (blessed). Then there is the reference in an account book to a payment for four gallons of wine for those who took part at the church of St John the Evangelist at Besançon on 10 July 1453, after the hour of mass, in a performance of the *chorea Macchabaeorum*, which has led some authors to believe that this was an actual *danse macabre* performed under ecclesiastical auspices, although others have seen this as a reference to a celebration linked with the book of the Maccabees.

Lydgate, on the other hand, took *Macabré* as the name of the author of the *danse* and, indeed, this was an existing surname in France in the fourteenth and fifteenth century.

Whatever the origin of the term *macabre*, it is interesting to find it used in terms of a *danse* by the French poet Lefèvre as early as 1376, nearly half a century prior to the completion of the wall-painting at Les Innocents. Although the mural in Paris is a clearly documented example, there are claims that this vernacular version was based on an older Latin text. The question as to whether the text preceded the visual presentations of the theme or *vice versa* has troubled some authors. Of course, not all murals have texts and by the end of the Middle Ages the *danse macabre* had become a popular theme that could be found not just in wall-paintings but also as a decorative motif on church furniture or amongst marginal decorations.
in books of hours, the only accompanying texts being the labels describing the various types. Whereas no visual presentation is known to predate the fifteenth century, the search for an original written source or earliest example of the theme has taken researchers back into the late fourteenth century although it remains difficult to discover where it originated. There is no denying, however, that the many different versions across Europe often show common traits, amongst which are the presence and characterization of the infant.

The Totentanz in Latin and German

If there was an original text underlying the subsequent variations of the theme, it is not unlikely that it was written in Latin, as Hammerstein proposed, and the Latin-German version that survives in a compilation manuscript at Heidelberg may well be our best indication of what this very early version was like.\(^{43}\) The danse macabre text without illuminations can be found on ff. 79-80v of this manuscript (Heidelberg Universitätsbibliothek, Codex pal. germ. 314), which was produced in Augsburg for Marguerite de Savoye in 1443-47. Although therefore relatively late, the text itself clearly predates the manuscript by far and, intriguingly, it is accompanied by a scribal note mentioning how the text was copied from another illuminated manuscript: 'vide de hoc in albo codice de commendatione animarum a principio picturas'.\(^{44}\) This 'white codex' is no longer known, and the scribe's mention of it is quite tantalizing because an illuminated manuscript is the most likely source for mural schemes such as the wall-painting at Les Innocents.

The Latin version in the Heidelberg manuscript is not a dialogue between Death and the different types but only consists of a two-line monologue by the latter; these lines are followed by an expanded four-line version in a German dialect that one author believed to indicate a Würzburg origin from the third quarter of the fourteenth century.\(^{45}\) There are twenty-four types in this Latin-German version, including four women, viz. the caesarissa (empress), nobilissa (noblewoman), monialis (nun) and mater (mother); this is important because, as we shall see, there were most probably no female types in the Parisian mural although Lydgate included a few in his poem. In addition, the final type of the mater is preceded by the puer in cunabulo, or the child in its cradle. The verses for

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\(^{43}\) Hammerstein (1980) 29-37, 149; also discussed by Enklaar (1950) 143ff; Kaiser (1983) 276-77.

\(^{44}\) Hammerstein (1980) 149. Transl.: See on this point the illustrations in the white codex 'On the commendations of souls', near the beginning.

the latter, both in Latin and in German, already contain the 'joke' that was to feature in so many later versions:

O cara mater, me vir trahit ater,
debo saltare, qui numquam scivi meare.
O we, liebe mueter main,
Ein schwarzer man zeucht mich dahin.
Wie wiltu mich also verlan?
Muss ich tanzen und kan nit gan?46

Death's victim is here characterized as an infant by his explicitly stated inability to walk; the irony is that he still has to dance regardless. As we have seen, Death was sometimes referred to or depicted as a black figure, and this motif also occurs in both versions.

The German text of the Heidelberg manuscript recurs elsewhere in an expanded version that includes a four-line address by Death to each of his victims. One of these is a blockbook edition printed with woodcut illustrations at Heidelberg in 1465 (Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Codex pal. germ. 438).47 This time the infant is preceded by the mother, who will be discussed in a separate section below. The woodcut shows the infant as a naked little male figure with baby-like dimples, standing on short plump legs; he gazes helplessly towards the partly-shrouded figure of Death, who has grabbed him by the wrist of his right arm. Not only his plumpness but also his nudity and his diminutive penis typify him as a weak and innocent infant; no other attributes are needed. Although based on the Latin-German manuscript version, the added speech by Death in the accompanying blockbook text make this an actual dialogue between the two:

[Death]
Kreuch her an du must hy tanczen lern
Weyne adre lache ich hore dich gern
Hettistu den totten yn dem munde
Is hilft dich nicht an desir stunde

[Infant]
Awe liebe muter meyn
Eyn swarczer man czeut mich do hyn
Wy wiltu mich nw vorlan
Nw mus ich tanczen vnd kan noch nicht gan48

It is clear that the 'black man' and the joke of the Latin-German text have been retained but Death adds to the grim picture with his insistence that the child must

46 Hammerstein (1980) 37-38. Transl.: [Latin] O dear mother, a black man pulls me away. I, who never learnt to walk, must now dance. [German] O woe, my dear mother, a black man pulls me away. How will you abandon me thus? Must I dance when I cannot walk?
47 See Hammerstein (1980) 189-91; also Kaiser (1983) 276-329, who also mentions a slightly later blockbook edition printed in Munich around 1480 as well as a number of unspecified manuscript versions without illuminations from the mid and later fifteenth century.
48 Kaiser (1983) 328. Transl.: [Death:] Crawl this way, you must here learn to dance. Weep or laugh, I gladly hear you. Even if you have the breast in your mouth, it will not help you in this hour. The translation of the child's words is the same as for the Heidelberg manuscript version.
dance, regardless of his suckling state; even if he cannot walk, he must yet crawl his way to the dance.

Although much has been lost, the infant, the mother, or sometimes the combination of mother and child are known to have appeared in other Totentanz versions within the German influence sphere. Antiquarian watercolour copies of the lost 'Kleinbasel' mural at Klingenthal in Basel, which was painted in the second half of the fifteenth century, show that it featured the infant and the mother as two final, separate types; the child is again a naked standing infant held by his right arm. Another example is the mural that was situated in a confessional chapel on the north-eastern side of the St Marienkirche at Lübeck; dated probably 1466 but replaced by a copy with new texts in 1700-1, it was destroyed in 1942. A child in its cradle is still recognizable in a corner by the door in a photograph taken before the destruction of the chapel; as we shall see, the cradle points to influence from Paris. Two examples from more central European regions show two different types of infans in the danse macabre; they are murals painted by the end of the medieval period and both are unusual in having survived to this day. Probably the later of the two is the mural at Metnitz in Carinthia, which was originally situated on the walls of the charnel-house although now its fragmentary remains are preserved in the parochial church; the accompanying text has unfortunately been lost. The Metnitz version has been given various dates from the third quarter of the fifteenth century on, but a later date around 1500-10 seems most likely. Just as the Heidelberg text versions, it includes both the mother with a cradle and the child as separate characters; the surviving part of the wall-painting still shows how the child is the same naked infant whose right arm is grabbed by the partly shrouded dark skeletal figure of Death. In contrast, the Totentanz mural at Hrastovlje in Istria shows the child in a totally different way; this mural is not accompanied by a text but we know from an inscription that it was painted in 1490 by Johannes von Kastav. Eleven pairs of victims coupled with Death are shown walking to the right on the wall in the interior of the romanesque St Trojstva church; the first of these, on the far left, is the naked figure of a child who meekly steps out of his rocking cradle to follow Death. Whereas both types of infans have not only their nudity in common but also the fact that Death has taken them by the

51 The child in its cradle at the end of this danse was also mentioned by Ethel Carleton Williams, 'The Dance of Death in Painting and Sculpture in the Middle Ages', Journal of the British Archaeological Association, 3rd series, 1 (1937) 240.
52 Hammerstein (1980) 191-92; Clark (1950) 88; Williams (1937) 246.
arm - in any case a common feature in the danse - the Hrastovlje type differs in having a cradle shown as its attribute; as we shall see, there were clearly other influences at work here.

The German versions of the Totentanz are not uniquely based on one original source for they some also influenced by other developments of the theme, most importantly the wall-painting at Les Innocents in Paris and its later printed edition by Guyot Marchant in 1485. This influence is particularly clear, as will be shown in the next section with woodblock illustrations that may have been printed by Heinrich Knoblochler around the same time, i.e. 1485, either at the printer's native town of Strasbourg or at Heidelberg where he is known to have been from 1486 on; entitled Der doten dantz mit figuren clage und antwort schon von allen staten der werlt, its thirty-seven types are predominantly male and the mother is absent. The illustration again shows a naked male child whom a partly shrouded figure of Death has taken by the right arm; the child's face looks almost ancient and while his physical proportions somewhat resemble those of a toddler, his thin body and limbs lack the characteristic baby-like plumpness. Curiously, it is the vigorously dancing skeleton instead of the child who holds that typical infant's toy, a windmill or whirligig; this and the label 'das iunge kindt' would almost suggest that we are dealing with a child who has passed the first stage of infantia yet the verses prove otherwise:

[Der doten] [das iunge kindt]
Junck nii geborns kyndelyn. A. A. a. ich enkan noch nit sprechen
Eyn ende hatt nii das leben dyn. Hüde geborn hide müß ich auff brechen.
Dye werlt mocht dich betrieben Wand keyne stunde mag ich sicher syn
Besser ist yss du sterbest in der wiegen Wie wolch ich byn eyn kneines kyndelyn
Dan hye ist kein bli bende stat Dyss mercenkent alle gar eben
Du haist auch der werlt luste nyt gehabt Ich han noch nyt leren leben
Wie woill dyr ist gesatzet eyn langes tzijll Und müß doch sterben also bald
Das enbadt dych nu nyt viell. Als woill stirbet das iunge als das alde.

Notwithstanding his appearance in the illustration, the child is but a newborn and as such naked and unable to speak; the first sounds he is able to utter constitute both a baby's tentative first cries and the first letter of the alphabet. Here the child's first line appears to based on Jeremiah 6:1, which in the Vulgate reads: 'et dixi a a a

56 Kaiser (1983) 158. Transl.: [Death:] Young newborn little child, your life now has an end. The world would deceive you. Better it is that you die in the cradle for here nothing is forever the same. You have also not had the lusts of the world. Even though you were given a longer delay, that will now not benefit you much. [The young child:] A, a, a, I cannot yet speak. Born today, today I must depart. For at no hour may I be secure, even though I am a small little child. Note this all well. I have not yet learnt to live and yet must die so soon. The young die as well as the old.
Domine Deus ecce nescio loqui quia puer ego sum'. 57 Although he has not even yet learnt to live, Death will give him no respite but instead snatches him from his cradle; the whirligig brandished by Death may symbolize the childish games that the infant will never be allowed to play now. There is only the conventional comfort that he will be spared the tribulations as well as the joys of the world through his early death.

The cradle as a feature in some of the danse macabre scenes of Death and the infans obviously predates Guyot Marchant's edition, in which it is such a prominent attribute, for the wall-painting at Les Innocents had long been famous; however, the many copies and editions of Marchant's printed version may well have helped spread this iconographical element. As mentioned earlier, the cradle was already to be found in the lost mural at Lübeck of c. 1466. There is another infant in its cradle in an illuminated Totentanz manuscript in the Landesbibliothek at Kassel (Ms. poet. et roman. 5), which dates from around 1470; the text accompanying the images is almost identical to that of the later printed edition by Knoblochtzer, both based on a text known as the 'Jüngerer achtzeiliger Totentanz' or, after its presumed area of origin, the 'Mittelrheinischer Totentanz'. 58 Although the Kassel manuscript has lost several pages through war damage and other vicissitudes, the remainder still includes the infant lying naked in a forward-rocking cradle; Death has this time entered the room holding a fiddle in his right hand while he makes a grab for the infant with his left. As explained in chapter 3, this cradle is rather unusual in not being the more commonly depicted lateral type. There is a further puzzle about the very vivid style of the illuminations and the inclusion of heraldic arms that might belong to the counts of Holland; Hammerstein did not exclude the possibility that the illuminations are Burgundo-Netherlandish work and the text a slightly later addition - quite the reverse of normal manuscript production practice.

Two more versions of the danse should be mentioned; although rather late, they are of interest in offering further illustrations of hybrid versions of Death and the infans. The first is an illuminated version apparently hand-written by count Wilhelm Wernher von Zimmern, a theologically trained collector; dating from c. 1520, it survives in a compilation manuscript containing a variety of religious/moralistic texts. 59 The count expanded the usual eight-line verses into fourteen-line versions, and clearly intended his Totentanz to be transcribed and illuminated professionally; in fact, two large luxurious copies of Zimmern's Totentanz survive

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but they were in their turn altered and 'improved' by illuminators in the late sixteenth century, in some cases even with replacement copies based on Holbein's 1538 edition. The count's own watercolour illustrations are sketch-like and rather amateurish, but probably copied from another fifteenth-century version with occasional changes. A quite skeletal Death is seen striding through a landscape holding a diminutive infant in a rocking cradle under his right arm while grasping with his other hand the right arm of a docile-looking toddler, who walks naked by his side; the whirligig in this child's left hand links it to other versions, e.g. that of the Knoblochtzer edition, but also to the *infans* in some versions of the Wheel of Life. In addition, a hobby-horse lies almost hidden amongst the foliage behind the two figures as a further attribute of *infantia*. Worth noting is the count's use of animal symbolism - in this case a rodent (mouse?) and a snail - which are also found in some printed *danse macabre* editions as well as in Hoefnagel's miniature. Secondly, there are the *danse macabre* friezes at Dresden, which were produced without texts around 1534-37 to serve as architectural decorations between the second and third floors of the Georgenschloß; after a fire in 1701 the damaged reliefs were taken down, restored and rearranged. The reliefs were originally painted and divided into separate groups according to the religious and secular classes. Unusual, but probably based on quite early versions of the *danse*, is the arrangement by which Death leads the way with small groups of types following him. The coherence of each of these groups is particularly clear in the ensemble of the naked putto-like child flanked by a confident mature adult and a bearded old man, who is nearly bent double, followed by a figure of Death; by itself, this group not only illustrates social types but also the most basic version of the Ages of Man.

**The *danse macabre* in France**

As we have seen, the cradle is a recurrent feature amongst the variations on the *danse macabre* theme, which was almost certainly present in the lost mural at Les Innocents in Paris. As recorded in the Bourgeois' diary, the wall-painting of the Franciscan monastery of Les Innocents was begun during the English occupation of Paris in August 1424; situated under the south arcade of the cemetery in a

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60 Hammerstein (1980) 209 and 212; these *de luxe* versions are MS 78.A. 19 in the Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin, and Codex 123 at Donaueschingen.

61 Hammerstein (1980) 210; similar use of animals to symbolize death and decay occurs, for example, in Nicolas Le Rouge's *La grant danse macabre des hommes & des femmes hystorice & augmentee de beaux ditz en latin* printed at Troyes in 1510(?), a copy of which was owned by Francis Douce (Bodleian Library, Douce MM 698).

location that was popular with locals and visitors alike, it soon became famous.63 The English poet John Lydgate, who almost certainly saw the mural in Paris not long after its completion, composed an English translation that seems to have followed the French original fairly closely, as will be discussed below. Sadly, the mural in Paris is said to have been destroyed in 1634 when the south wall had to make way for widening of the adjacent road;64 the cemetery itself was closed in 1785 and the church, cloisters and charnel-houses were demolished soon after. However, its text was preserved not just in Lydgate's Middle-English translation but also in a woodcut version printed for the first time in 1485 by the Parisian publisher Guyot Marchant.

The French text of the Parisian danse is generally ascribed to Jean Gerson, earlier chancellor of the University of Paris, whose interest in children is also apparent in his treatise 'De parvulis ad Christum trahendis' of c. 1410, based on Christ's words in Matthew 19:14.65 However, Gerson left Paris in 1415 and was in voluntary exile by the time the Parisian mural was painted; although the poem was probably written by someone within Gerson's circle, it might be attributed instead to his friend Nicolas de Clemengis, who in 1425 lectured at the Collegium Narbonense in Paris.66 Whoever the author of the Parisian poem may have been, quite telling in the light of the relevant passage in the French danse macabre text is Gerson's advice that, in order for children to learn, one should address them in a language that they can understand, much like nurses and mothers answer the prattle of infants with similar baby-talk.67

Although there are no records of the appearance of the mural prior to the printed edition, its text survives in several manuscript copies from the first half of the fifteenth century, i.e. long before Marchant's printed version; however, they are all clearly based on the text from Les Innocents, which was probably composed specifically for the mural.68 Marchant appears to have adhered to the order of the types in the Parisian wall-painting; although the necessity to divide them into pairs on each page meant that the idea of a chain of dancing figures was inevitably lost, his verses appear to be quite a reliable source for the original Parisian text. The infant is the antepenultimate of the thirty types presented by Marchant in his first

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64 According to Hammerstein (1980) 167. However, different dates are given for its destruction by other authors; for example, Kaiser (1983) 71 claims it was destroyed as early as 1529, whereas Clark (1950) 24 maintains that it was first defaced and then finally demolished in 1669.
DEATH AND THE INFANT

 edition; in the second, printed at Lyons in 1486, ten more characters were introduced including the schoolmaster and his pupil, a small *puer.* In Marchant's woodcut the infant shares the page with the Franciscan *cordelier,* who is grabbed by the shoulders by the two figures of Death flanking him; the naked infant on the far right is sitting upright in a rocking cradle as the central figure of Death takes him by the hand. As Death and the infant gaze upon each other, the accompanying verses record their dialogue:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Le mort</th>
<th>Lenfant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Petit enfant na gueres ne:</td>
<td>A. a. a. ie je scay parler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Au monde auras peu de plaisance</td>
<td>Enfant suis: iay la langue mue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A la danse seras mene</td>
<td>Hier nasquis huy men fault aler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comme autres, car mort a puissance</td>
<td>Ie ne fais quenrent et yssue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seur tous: du iour de la naissance</td>
<td>Rien nay meffait. mais de peur sue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conuent chascun a mort offrir:</td>
<td>Prendre en gre me fault cest le mieulx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fol est qui nen a congnosance.</td>
<td>Lordonance dieu ne se mue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qui plus vit plus a a souffrir</td>
<td>Aussi tost meurt ieiisne que vieuy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the contents are harsh, the verses are moving and one is easily tempted to read some sympathy into Death's words, even though his consolation is the conventional reminder that the infant is spared a lot of suffering by his early death. As in the German version by Knoblochtzer, which was also printed around this time, the newborn status of the infant is stressed by his first utterings: A a a, I know not how to talk. Being but one day old, he is still utterly inarticulate and he regrets having to leave the world so soon upon entering it. The infant's third line does not elaborate on the bitter joke of the infant who cannot walk yet has to dance, but the image of the rocking cradle emphasizes his helpless state.

Of course, by the time that Marchant produced his edition, printed versions of the German *Totentanz* had already been in existence for at least two decades, not to mention manuscript copies of the German, French and English versions. Marchant may have been the first printer to produce an edition of the Parisian *danse macabre* text but he was not the only one who saw its potential, for his version was soon followed by an undated luxury version on parchment (Paris, BN, Département des imprimés, vélins 579), which has been dated c. 1485 and attributed to Antoine Vérard. The *Grande Danse Macabre de Troyes,* printed in 1486, was also clearly based on Marchant's second, extended edition and contains quite similar woodcut

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69 These characters also feature in the *Grande danse macabre de Troyes* printed in 1486 and clearly based on Marchant's edition; see the facsimile edition *La grande danse macabre des hommes et des femmes, précédée du dict des trois mors et des trois vifs, du débat du corps et de l'âme, et de la complainte de l'âme damnée* (Paris, 1862) 12. In his response the 'maistre d'escole' uses the description 'jeunes enfens' to refer to his pupils.


illustrations, including one of the *enfant* in his cradle.\textsuperscript{72} A few years later, around 1490, Vérand produced another large version of the Parisian *danse* (Paris, BN, Cabinet des Estampes, Te. 8 rés. C21297-21301), which originally consisted of a hand-coloured sheet measuring 50 x 190 cm and showing the characters in pairs under ornamental arches with the matching text underneath.\textsuperscript{73}

However famous and influential, the Parisian mural is obviously not the earliest example of the *danse macabre*. Hammerstein argued that it was preceded by other wall-paintings in France, such as the one on the north wall of the choir in the abbey church of St Robert at La Chaise-Dieu (Haute-Loire), which he dated c. 1410-20; however, most authors seem to prefer the more traditional date of c. 1470.\textsuperscript{74} Early this century Emile Mâle, who also attributed a similarly later date to the mural at La Chaise-Dieu, commented on the lively poses adopted here by Death, especially in one scene: 'his best is the gesture of the corpse concealing his hideous face behind a body arm so as not to frighten the infant; he even seems to be ashamed'.\textsuperscript{75} The penultimate of Death's twenty-four victims in this version, the infant lies partly swaddled on the floor with his arms crossed against his chest; although there is no cradle, his pose and the criss-cross swaddling bands that cover his lower body characterize his age. The last figure in the *danse* has been described as a cleric, a pilgrim, or even the child's mother.\textsuperscript{76}

Other examples of *danse macabre* murals in France in which the infant features include the late examples at Meslay-le-Grenet (near Chartres) of c. 1490 and La Ferté-Loupière (Burgundy) of c. 1500:\textsuperscript{77} both are evidently based on a woodcut version by Marchant or one of his imitators, and show the infant sitting upright in his cradle. It has been suggested that the mural at the Kapelle Notre-Dame in Kermaria-en-Isquit (Brittany), which is only slightly later than its Parisian counterpart but quite different in style, could originally have contained the child in its last compartment, but together with other traditional characters it may have been lost due to structural alterations or even left out altogether because of the limited space available.\textsuperscript{78} There must have been other wall-paintings but few remain and

\textsuperscript{72} Grande danse macabre (1862) 20.
\textsuperscript{73} Hammerstein (1980) 174-75.
\textsuperscript{74} Hammerstein (1980) 69, 162-64, proposed the earlier date although the later date is given in Claudie and Pierre Boissé, *La danse macabre de La Chaise-Dieu* (Brioude, n.d) 19. H and B Utzinger, *Itinéraires des danses macabres* (n.pl., 1996) 127, rejected a date before 1440 as proposed by some authors in favour of one around 1465-70.
\textsuperscript{76} Clark (1950) list in Appendix A, 117; Boissé (n.d.) 16 and 43.
\textsuperscript{77} See Hammerstein (1980) 175-77.
\textsuperscript{78} Clark (1950) 30; Hammerstein (1980) 164-65.
there is now no real evidence for any danse macabre murals predating the one at Les Innocents in Paris.

The theme of the danse macabre spread across other parts of Europe, including Spain and Italy, although in some places there are only literary examples remaining.\textsuperscript{79} It was also known in the southern Netherlands: examples are known from Binche, Brussels and, according to a proverb, from Ypres.\textsuperscript{80} Around 1445-59 the Franco-Flemish painter Simon Marmion (d. 1489) depicted a Dance of Death mural in the cloister of a monastery in the background of one of a series of panels on the life of St Bertin, originally part of the reredos of the abbey church at St Omer but now in the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin; although it is impossible to identify this detail as any once existing mural, there is evidence that Marmion's native city of Amiens had a danse macabre wall-painting at one time.\textsuperscript{81} No examples are now known from the northern Netherlands but they may well have been lost.\textsuperscript{82}

\textit{The Dance of Death in England}

As mentioned earlier, the wall-painting at Les Innocents of the danse macabre was famous and highly influential, even before Marchant published his first version in print in 1485. Soon after the completion of the Parisian mural, probably as early as the later 1420s or early 1430s, its text was translated by the English monk and poet John Lydgate. In his prologue Lydgate explicitly mentioned having seen the mural at Les Innocents, which he claimed to have translated on the advice of Frenchmen; although his version is not a literal translation 'worde be worde, but folwyng the substaunce', it yet adheres to its French counterpart rather closely. Different versions of Lydgate's Middle-English translation survive; MS Ellesmere 26/A.13 has the same order of personages as Marchant's printed 1485 edition and may come

\textsuperscript{79} Clark (1950) where its appearance in these countries is discussed in different chapters.

\textsuperscript{80} Enklaar (1950) 12-13. The proverb 'hij ziet er uit als de dood van leperen' to describe a thin, gaunt person has been explained by some as a reference to a plague epidemic in that town. However, the analogous expression 'he siit ut als de Dod van Lübeck' suggests that it may be a reference to a Dance of Death mural in both towns. Apparently there is also a bell in the Belfort at Ypres dating from 1683, which features part of a Dance of Death, just as there is at Ghent. See F.A Stoett, \textit{Nederlandsche spreekwoorden, spreekwijzen, uitdrukkingen en gezegden, naar hun oorsprong en beteekenis verklaard} (Zutphen, 1915) vol. 1, 135 and notes, for a discussion of the proverb.

\textsuperscript{81} Clark (1950) 84-85; however, according to Hammerstein (1980) 166-67, there are indications that the Amiens mural combined men and women in its danse, which he claimed would suggest a much later date. Nonetheless, women already featured in the Heidelberg manuscript version as well as in Lydgate's poem.

\textsuperscript{82} Enklaar (1950) 13, commented that the seventeenth-century Dutch poet and playwright Vondel wrote a poem 'Op een Schilderij. De doot zet hoogh en laech gelyck', which suggests that the author had actually seen a painted version.
closest to the version included in the wall-painting at St Paul's. The dialogue runs as follows:83

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dethe to the Chylde</th>
<th>The Chylde answereth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Litil Enfaunt / that were but late borne</td>
<td>A a a / a worde I can not speke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shape yn this worlde / to haue no plesaunce</td>
<td>I am so 3onge / I was bore 3isterdai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thow moste with other / that gon here to forne</td>
<td>Dethe is so hasti / on me to be wreke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be lad yn haste / be fatal ordynaunce</td>
<td>And liste no lenger / to make no delai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lerne of newe / to go on my daunce</td>
<td>I cam but now / and now I go my daunche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ther mai non age / a-scape yn sothe ther fro</td>
<td>Of me no more / no tale shal be tolde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late eueri wight / haue this yn remembraunce</td>
<td>The wille of god / no man with-stonde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who lengest leueth / most shal suffre wo.</td>
<td>mai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lydgate adopted the infant's tentative first utterings from the French version but a new element is Death's command that the child should 'lerne' to dance. Tristram commented on Lydgate's translation that 'Death's words to the Child, and the Child's reply, are so touched with tenderness that they merit full quotation. [...] To those neither humble or proud, Death adopts an appropriate aspect'.84 Yet for all their seeming tenderness, the verses paint a grim tale, even if the reference to Death as a teacher of infants is not further exploited as a cruel joke by Lydgate.

Lydgate's translation of the Parisian Dance of Death was probably included in some of the danse macabre murals in England that have since been lost but are known to have existed at, for example, Stratford-upon-Avon.85 The most notable English example was, however, the version that was painted on wooden panels displayed in the large cloister of Old St Paul's Cathedral in London; the cloister with its paintings was destroyed on Protector Somerset's orders in 1549 and no pictures or contemporary descriptions survive. However, the danse at St Paul's was remembered by Sir Thomas More, who in his work The Four Last Things recalled being greatly moved by the sight of it, and discussed by John Stowe in his Survey of London published in 1598.86 Even without contemporary records, we know from Lydgate's version - which contains some variations such as the characters of the abbess and the 'Gentilwoman amerous' not found in its Parisian counterpart - that the St Paul's series included the infant amongst its thirty-five types; in addition, the London danse closed with the figures of 'Machabre the

83 Warren (1931) 68-71, stanzas 73-74; compare BL MS Lansdowne 699, stanzas 67-68, with the headings 'Infans' and 'Responsum'.
84 Tristram (1976) 170.
85 Dance of Death murals in England are discussed in Miriam Clare Gill, Late Medieval Wall Painting in England: Content and Context (c. 1330 - c. 1530), PhD thesis, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London (awaiting submission) chapter 4. See also Caiger-Smith (1963) 48.
doctour' and the translator himself. So famous was the *danse macabre* at St Paul's Cathedral that the theme became known in England as the 'Dance of [St] Paul's. Thus, we know from records that a painting of the *danse* by the Bristol cordwainer William Wytteney (d. 1448) was hung on a battlement before the south door of All Saints' church in Bristol, with annual payments for unrolling it, hanging it and rolling it up again. At Holy Trinity church in Long Melford (Suffolk) the 'Dawnce of Powlis' was painted on three long cloths hung before the rood loft for all to see.

Some scarce reminders survive in England of this once popular theme, *e.g.* the single pair of Death and the gallant youth of the early sixteenth century at the church of St Mary Magdalene at Newark-on-Trent (Nottinghamshire), or the four panels with their black figures of Death in the choir of the priory church at Hexham (Northumberland) of c. 1500; the *danse macabre* also featured as a marginal illustration in some printed editions of the Sarum hours. Other schemes at Salisbury Cathedral, Wortley Hall and Croydon have failed to survive but new discoveries are possible, perhaps at Stratford-upon-Avon where the remains of the *danse macabre* mural still exist, albeit hidden behind panelling. One further hint of the popularity of the Dance can still be found on a carved nave bench-end of c. 1550 at Drax in Yorkshire, where a figure of Death appears to be dancing above a roundel with a fleur-de-lys, accompanied below by a dancing pig playing the bagpipes. None of the surviving English fragments feature the infant yet the popularity of Lydgate's translation makes it probable that this character was included in many lost versions.

**DEATH AND THE MOTHER**

Sometimes other literary sources provide a hint of familiarity with the theme of the *danse macabre*. The Scottish poet William Dunbar (c. 1460 - c. 1513), who may have known the mural at Les Innocents in Paris or its London counterpart with

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87 See Clark (1950) Appendix A, 117.
90 See Clark (1950) chapter 2, 7-21; Williams (1937) 238.
91 Records were made of the mural on the north wall of the Guild Chapel at Stratford-upon-Avon during restoration in the 1950s, which indicate that there were originally thirty scenes and that the mural was clearly related to its counterparts in Paris and London; see Gill, PhD thesis, chapter 4. It is conceivable that the figure of the infant still remains at the far end of the mural, which was only partly exposed during the restoration work.
Lydgate's verses, chose to include the infant amongst 'all estatis, / Princis, prelotis and potestatis' in his famous elegy *Timor mortis conturbat me*:

That strang unmercifull tyrand
Takis one the moderis breist sowkand
The bab full of benignite:
*Timor mortis conturbat me.*

This image works in two ways for while Dunbar laments the death of the baby, at the same time there is the cruel image of the mother front whose breast the child is taken by the 'unmercifull tyrand'. This is important for, as we have seen, in the Dance of Death the two types sometimes occur together or refer to one another, infants naturally turning to their mothers for protection whereas the mothers themselves also seem particularly concerned about their children's fate. This is clearly illustrated in a drawing in a compilation manuscript on paper produced by Jean Miélot at Lille in 1468 (Paris, BN ms. fr. 17001, f. 110v); it shows a woman wringing her hands in despair as Death presents her with a sealed document, meanwhile pointing his huge arrow at the head of the infant in its cradle.

Whereas it is mainly men who are presented in the various texts and depictions of the *danse macabre*, there is also the occasional woman taking part. She may have been absent from Guyot Marchant's printed version, and thus probably also from the Paris mural, but a few women may have joined the dance in other very early versions, nonetheless, including Lydgate's translation. The earliest known German text of the *Totentanz*, which survives in the manuscript at Heidelberg discussed earlier (Codex pal. germ. 314), featured the *mater* as one of four women and the last of its total of twenty-four types. The verses for the mother, with their Latin two-line introduction, characteristically lack the address by Death but provide an early example of what would become a rather typical sentiment for this type:

O fili care, quae te volui liberare,
Morte praeventa saliendo sumque retenta.
O kind, ich wolt dich haben erlost
So ist empfallen mir der trost.
Der tod hat das fur komen
Und mich mit dir genommen.

94 See De gouden eeuw der Vlaamse miniatuur: Het mecenaat van Filip de Goede 1445-1475, exhibition catalogue (Brussels/Amsterdam, 1959) cat. 84; the manuscript is one of Miélot's so-called minuten or initial designs to be reproduced as luxury copies, and contains literary and historical texts as well as a *danse macabre*.
95 Hammerstein (1980) 38. Transl.: [Latin] O dear son, I wanted to deliver you. Prevented by Death I am forced to dance. [German] O child, I wanted to deliver you. Now I have lost all consolation. Death has prevented it and has taken me together with you.
The mother laments her child's fate as much as her own, thus illustrating a maternal ideal. Clearly related to this version is the Heidelberg blockbook edition of 1465, which has four women amongst twenty-five types; here the mother precedes the infant, who is the final type in this printed edition of the Totentanz. As a mother, she is shown in the woodcut illustration with the most typical of attributes, the rocking cradle, which is also referred to in the accompanying text:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{[Death]} & \quad \text{[Mother]}
\text{Nw sweiget vnd lot ewir krigen} & \quad \text{O kind ich wold dich haben irlost}
\text{Loft dem Kinde noch mit der wygen} & \quad \text{Nw ist empfallen mir der trost}
\text{Ir must alle beyde an desen tancz} & \quad \text{Der tod hot das vorkomen}
\text{Fraw lacht zo wirt der schympf gancz} & \quad \text{Vnd mich mit dir genomen}\end{align*}
\]

It is clear, then, that the child is not Death's only victim as the mother will have to accompany him, thus visualizing what happened only too often in real life; maybe the naked infant's appeal to his mother in the succeeding scene was meant to be addressed to this same mother as a sequel.

The mother in the Heidelberg blockbook version is not an exceptional type as she also occurred in a mural that could easily vie with its Parisian counterpart for being the most famous Dance of Death: the 'liebe Tod von Basel' or 'Death of Basel'. In fact, Basel had two such murals but both were destroyed and there has been some debate in the past on which might be the earlier of the two. The more celebrated 'Großbasel' mural was to be found on the churchyard wall of the Dominican 'Predigerkloster' in the southern part of the city whereas the smaller 'Kleinbasel' version was situated in the cloister of the church of the Dominican (up to 1480 Augustinian) nunnery in the northern suburb of Klingenthal. Although the Klingenthal version was once thought to be as early as 1312, this now seems unlikely and instead the Großbasel mural is believed to be the earlier of the two, having perhaps been painted shortly after the disastrous 1439 plague that broke out during the Council of Basel (1431-48), possibly even by the artist Konrad Witz (1395-1447). Both versions are quite extensive, containing thirty-nine types each with some variations. In any case, the famous Großbasel version was renovated over the centuries until it finally became neglected in the eighteenth century and was destroyed in 1805 when the need to widen the adjoining street.

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97 Kaiser (1983) 326. Transl.: [Death:] Now be silent and leave your nagging. Follow your child with the cradle. You must both join in this dance. Woman, laugh, for then the fun will be complete. The mother's words are virtually identical to those in the Latin-German version translated above.
98 Williams (1937) 249 recognized the date of 1312 as a misreading but it was put forward as the date for the Klingenthal mural by Warren (1931) x, and adopted as such by Spinrad (1987) 5. Clark (1950) 60, also accepted the idea that it was from this that the Großbasel version was derived. However, see Kaiser (1983) 194-97, and Hammerstein (1980) 77-80, 183-88.
caused the demolition of the wall; only a few fragments were rescued for posterity. However, apart from some contemporary descriptions the appearance of the famous 'Death of Basel' in the Predigerkloster was preserved in both a watercolour copy commissioned in 1773 and in a series of copper engravings published by Matthäus Merian in 1621 with subsequent reprints. From this we find that, although the Großbasel mural did not contain the infant by itself, the penultimate type of the series was the mother with her child. Merian's engraving shows the mother carrying a wooden rocking cradle in her left arm while a small boy is seen clinging to her right side; Death, meanwhile, seems to be using the opportunity to fondle the woman's breast. The accompanying text runs as follows:

[Death]  
Ach Fräwlein lassen ewer klagen  
Tanz dem Kind nach mit der Waglen:  
Dann ihr möcht mir hie nicht entfliehen  
Den Gasthut wil ich euch abziehen.

[Mother]  
Ich hab mich allezeit ergeben  
In Todt / hoff aber ewigs Leben:  
Wiewol der Todt mich greifft hart an.  
Nimpt mich mit Kind / vnd sampt dem  
Mann.99

The text as given by Merian is rather similar to that in the Heidelberg blockbook and it is likely that they are both ultimately derived from the same early version, even though Merian's version probably does not accurately reflect the original text of the mural. The verses on the mural were originally located above its almost life-size figures but in the 1658 renovation, i.e. after Merian had published his version, the texts were copied onto wooden tablets and hung under the figures.

The Klingenthal mural was originally situated on the west and north walls of the cloister and probably created in the second half of the fifteenth century, i.e. after its Großbasel counterpart; the sometimes proposed date of 1312 could have been based on a misreading of the year 1512 above the figure of the Count, indicating a later (minor) restoration. The convent was closed in 1559 and its buildings reused, but the mural managed to survive in an increasingly poor state until the destruction of the cloister in 1860. The 1768 watercolour copy of the Klingenthal mural by the local antiquarian Emanuel Büchel is believed to be probably an accurate reflection of its then appearance.100 It proves that the Klingenthal Totentanz contained both

99 Kaiser (1983) 272. It should be noted that the 1649 edition used by Kaiser, and shown here, mistakenly uses 'Malerin' instead of 'mother', possibly because of the final type of the 'Maler' which follows after. Transl.: [Death to the Mother:] O young woman, leave off your lament, dance after your child with the cradle. For you may not escape from me here and I shall take off your guest-hat. [The Mother:] I have always resigned myself to death yet hope to attain eternal life, although Death grabs me hard and takes me together with my child and my husband. According to J and W Grimm, Deutsches Wörterbuch (Leipzig, 1878) vol. 4:1:1, 1481, 'den Gasthut abziehen' is an idiomatic expression for making a guest become less shy, or even (over-)familiar.
100 Hammerstein (1980) 188-89.
an infant and a mother as its two last types; the accompanying verses for each also resemble those in the Heidelberg blockbook.

Variations can sometimes be found, e.g. the version found in a compilation manuscript of c. 1480 by the Augsburg humanist Sigismund Gossembrot, which shows a woman carrying a swaddled infant as she follows Death's predominantly male dance, in this instance with the cardinal in front. Instead, the rather simple wall-painting in the St Marienkirche at Berlin, which was probably painted around 1485, appears to have been influenced by the *danse macabre* of Les Innocents, which had just been printed by Guyot Marchant; it still survives, after having been discovered beneath a layer of whitewash in 1860, but it has lost the mother and child - or just the infant by himself - who probably concluded its row of types. The Upper-German version of the Heidelberg manuscript and blockbook seems to have been predominant in the German-influenced regions, however. As mentioned earlier, the mother with her baby in a cradle also occurred as a separate type in the wall-painting at Metnitz; although its accompanying verses have failed to survive, it appears to have been close to the version presented in the Heidelberg blockbook. Also following the Heidelberg *Totentanz*, the mother with a naked male infant, whom Death has taken by the right arm again, were the last two types in the mural painted between 1516 and 1520 by Niklaus Manuel on the churchyard wall of the Dominican convent in Berne; originally accompanied by verses by the painter himself, the whole ensemble was lost when the wall was demolished in 1660 in order to widen the adjacent road, but fortunately its appearance can be gauged from a gouache copy painted in 1649 by the local painter and art-dealer Albrecht Kauw. The mother again featured, this time with a slightly older child, in the version painted on canvas without accompanying texts by Jakob von Wyl for the Jesuit college at Lucerne around 1615; the mother clearly tries to protect her young son, who still wears a child's robe with the added attributes of a windmill and a hobby-horse to emphasize his state of *infantia*. An interesting detail is that Death appears to entice the child with an apple - the traditional means of tempting young children in medieval lore. Although of a rather late date, the Lucerne

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101 Hammerstein (1980) 150-51; Gossembrot's version is unusual in not showing the traditional pairs but instead small groups of people following Death's prime victim in each case, which may be a survival of an earlier type of the *danse macabre*.

102 Clark (1950) 83-84 and Appendix A, 114; Hammerstein (1980) 156-59, instead believed there was just the infant without the mother, which would be more likely if based on the Paris/Marchant version. This last scene was probably destroyed during reconstruction of the church interior after the Reformation; the mural was described as lost in 1729. The scene of Death and the Fool preceding the (mother and) infant was destroyed during further rebuilding work in 1892-93.


105 This detail was observed by Williams (1937) 255; see also chapter 2.
version illustrates the relevance of the theme, and these two characters in it, to later
generations.

The mother as a type already occurred amongst the mainly male protagonists
in the Dance of Death, and eventually the popularity of the danse macabre led to the
creation of a new version solely dedicated to women, the Danse macabre des
femmes, the text of which has generally been attributed to the Parisian poet Martial
d'Auvergne. This women's version survives in several printed editions and five
manuscripts, including one lavishly illuminated late medieval manuscript now in the
Bibliothèque Nationale (ms. fr. 995), which describes thirty-six women; this is an
extension of the earliest known manuscript of 1482 (Paris, BN ms. fr. 1186),
which comprised thirty types.106 The illuminations in ms. fr. 995 have been
attributed to an anonymous artist known as the Master of Philippe of Guelders,
active from about 1495 to 1510, who is known to have worked for Louis XII; the
quality of the manuscript, which also contains the male danse macabre and a poem
on the Three Living and the Three Dead, suggests that it may have been produced
as a compendium on human mortality for someone in the royal circle.107

Unlike their male counterparts, women proved rather more difficult to
categorize according to profession so they were distinguished much more according
to age and to marital position.108 Thus, there is the little girl, who in ms. fr. 995
and the illustrated printed editions appears rather older with her long loose hair and
feminine attire. Addressed by Death as 'gente garsette', like a true child she is
concerned most about her cherished possessions that she is forced to leave behind:
'Pour dieu quon garde ma poupee / Mes cinq pierres ma belle cotte'.109 This little
girl is the most junior of the female types for there is no infant in this version;
although often shown sexless, the infans is the youngest representative of Mankind
and thus male by default - therefore perhaps unsuitable for this uniquely female
version of the Danse Macabre, or simply superfluous as a mere duplication.

106 See Ann Tukey Harrison (ed.) with a chapter by Sandra L Hindman, The Danse Macabre of
Women: Ms. fr. 995 of the Bibliothèque Nationale (Kent/London, 1994), 1 for a list of all known
versions: the latest manuscript version is MS Arsenal 3637 of 1519. Harrison and Hindman only
include the two printed editions by Guyot Marchant dating from 1486 and 1491, respectively, but
not the version in the 1486 La grande danse macabre de Troyes (1862) 25-45.
107 Hindman in Harrison and Hindman (1994) 25, with a further description of the manuscript in
Appendix B.
108 As was pointed out in Harrison and Hindman (1994) 10: 'For seventeen of the thirty-one
male roles in the dance, there is simply no female counterpart'.
109 Paris, BN ms. fr. 995, f. 38v, as edited by Harrison and Hindman (1994) 107: 'Please take
care of my doll, my five stones, my beautiful coat'. Incidentally, the little girl's reply shown in
the illustrated page does not appear to offer the deviating reading of 'a maniere' instead of the usual
'a ma mere', as Harrison claims; in fact, the transcriptions given contain a great number of errors
throughout. Cf. Grande danse macabre (1862) 42.
Perhaps surprisingly, the mother is not included as a separate type here but the traditional concern about leaving one's children behind is now expressed by 'la femme veufve' on f. 29v of ms. fr. 995:

Jay des enfans bien largement
Qui sont ieunes en non pourveux
Dont iay pitie mais nullement
Dieu ne laisse aucuns despourueux

Although their ages are not stated, the widow claims that her many children are young and not provided for; because she has no husband to support the family she is forced to leave behind, she can only trust in God to provide for them. The author clearly felt that such concern typified the widow; most other wives instead bemoan their pretty clothes and luxurious life-style, and none hint at any children they may have.

Notwithstanding its seeming absence, the infant is not completely lacking here for the author of the Danse macabre des femmes did include two types that relate closely to infancy: the nurse and the expectant mother. In Guyot Marchant's 1491 printed edition, as well as in the 1486 Grande danse macabre de Troyes, the wetnurse combines a prominent cleavage with the additional attributes of two ladles, possibly in reference to the newborn's first feed or to the nurse's role in weaning the baby with porridge or other more solid food once it is old enough. In contrast, the wetnurse on f. 34v of ms. fr. 995 is a buxom woman holding a swaddled infant in her left arm. The text in the manuscript version reads:

La mort
A pres nourrice vostre beau filz
Non obstant son couverture
Et son beau bonnet a troys filz
Vous ne pouvez plus jouer
Car tous deux vous mourrez ensemble
La mort prend tout quant bon luy semble

La nourrice
A ceste dance fault aller
Comme font les presbytres aux seyne
Je voulais bien reculer
Mais ie me sens la boce en lame
Entre les bras de mon alaine
Cest enfant meurt despidimie
Il nest qui ait heure ne demye

There is no indication whatsoever of the age of the child and wetnurses were usually in attendance for several years; in this instance, they both succumb together

111 Grande danse macabre (1862) 38.
112 This seems a more likely interpretation of the attributes shown than that given in the rather inaccurate description in Harrison and Hindman (1994) 18: 'The Wetnurse, slovenly dressed in a tight-fitting bodice that reveals her bulging bosom and a scarf that does not quite cover her stringy yellow hair brandishes a baby's rattle in one hand as she puts her other hand on her hips, scowling at the viewer and ignoring the skeleton'.
113 Harrison and Hindman (1994) 90-91, with corrections of their edited text after comparison with the manuscript.
to an epidemic, possibly the plague in view of the swelling ('boce') between her arms mentioned by the nurse. Although the illuminator chose to show the usual basic swaddled infant, Death in the text refers to the child's bonnet 'in three ply knit'; babies' heads were normally protected but one may also think of the practice of part-swaddling a slightly older infant from the arms down and donning it a bonnet, as shown in the Gaignières drawing of the almost contemporary tomb slab of Jean-Saladin d'Anglure of Givry at Nangis. Obviously the child is old enough to be taken out to play, as Death suggests; even though the wetnurse's response is rather conventional, the dialogue does hint at a warm relationship between the nurse and her charge who is called her 'beau filz'. Quite interesting in this respect is the tomb monument commissioned on 29 March 1462 by René d'Anjou from the sculptor Pons Poncet for his nurse Tiphaine la Magine (d. 1458) at the church of Nantilly (Saumur), with clear instructions that she should be represented recumbent with in her arms her two 'nourrissons', René himself and his sister Marie. In England it was also not uncommon for kings to reward their former nurses with a pension or other tokens of gratitude and, perhaps, remembered affection.

Death shows hardly any more mercy to the pregnant wife whose laced boddice in the 1486 *Grande danse macabre de Troyes* and Marchant's 1491 edition clearly shows her condition:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{La mort} & \\
\text{La femme grosse} & \\
\text{Femme grosse prenez laisir} & \\
\text{fauray bien petit de deduy} & \\
\text{Dentendre a vous legierement} & \\
\text{De mon premier enfentement} & \\
\text{Car huy mourrez cest le plaisir} & \\
\text{Si recommande a dieu le fruit} & \\
\text{De dieu et son commandement} & \\
\text{Et mon ame pareillement} & \\
\text{Allons pas a pas bellement} & \\
\text{Helas bien cuydoye autrement} & \\
\text{En gettant vostre cueur es cieulx} & \\
\text{Auoir grant ioye en ma gesine} & \\
\text{Et nayez paour aucunement} & \\
\text{Mais tout va bien piteusement} & \\
\text{Dieu ne fait riens que pour le mieulx} & \\
\text{Fortune tost se change et fine} & \\
\end{align*}
\]

Although not visibly pregnant in the illumination on f. 32v of ms. fr. 995, the wife responds wistfully about the great joy she thought to carry in her womb. Her remark that this should have been her first 'enfentement' makes her plight all the more poignant, especially as it follows immediately upon Death snatching the newlywed, 'la nouuelle marie', on f. 32; in the printed edition from Troyes and Marchant's version the two even share the same frame, adding to the sense of an almost inevitably fatal sequence of events. Death's exhortation that she should join

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114 Michele Beaulieu and Victor Beyer, *Dictionnaire des sculpteurs français du Moyen Age* (Paris, 1992) 170 and fig. 58, as recorded by Gaignières. Father and son Jean and Pons Poncet were also responsible for René's own tomb at Saint-Maurice d'Angers.


116 Harrison and Hindman (1994) 82-83, with corrections of their edited text after comparison with the manuscript; *Grande Danse Macabre* (1862) 35.
his dance step by step may also be a reference to her advanced condition, even when this consideration will now no longer benefit her or her unborn child. Of all types shown in the *Danse macabre des femmes*, this would have been the one state to strike a chord with most women, at least those outside the religious orders.

**THE DANCE OF DEATH AND MEDIEVAL DRAMA**

The dialogues between Death and his victims in the *danse macabre* are but one side of its dramatic potential; there is also the fact that it is not only referred to, but also usually shown as an actual dance. There are indications that the *danse macabre* was actually performed occasionally, as in an entry for 1449 in the Burgundian accounts with regard to a performance at the court of Philip the Good:

> A Nicaise de Cambray, painctre, demourant en la ville de Douay, pour luy aider a defroier ou mois de septembre lan MCCCCXLIX, de la ville de Bruges, quant il a joue devant m[on] d[it] s[eigneur] en son hostel, avec autres ses compaignons, certain jeu, histoire et moralite sur le fait de la danse macabre - VIII francs

In addition, there is the enigmatic reference to the performance of the *chorea Macchabaeorum* at Besançon on 10 July 1453, which was mentioned earlier. Even though unambiguous references to performances of the *danse* are rare, Death was by this time a well-established character in medieval drama and due to remain so in the Renaissance. A very early performance in which Death seems to have played a part is alluded to by the Scottish chronicler John Fordun in his description of the wedding celebrations of Alexander III to Yolande of Dreux at Jedburgh in 1285; Fordun recorded how there was some kind of musical play or procession, in which a mysterious character appeared who silenced the music and singing, reduced the dancers to a state of rigidity, changed joy into lamentation, and thus left the spectators horrified. It cannot have been a true *danse macabre* at this early stage but contemporary French poems on the theme of the Three Living and the Three Dead show that the spectre of Death was a familiar theme at the time; the fact that Alexander III died suddenly only five months later would have helped to make the Jedburgh performance seem all the more memorable.

Sadly, we know relatively little of medieval drama until the fifteenth century, the period from which most manuscripts survive; how old such plays really are or how they were performed are questions that are still being hotly debated, as we have seen in the previous chapter. Death was particularly popular both as a theme and as a character in his own right in medieval morality plays, which are probably

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117 Quoted by Enklaar (1950) 75.
older than the versions that have come down to us; after all, one of the earliest surviving morality plays, *The Castle of Life* of c. 1390, predates the Towneley and N-Town mystery cycles as we know them.\(^{120}\) Instead, we have mostly fifteenth-century versions, such as the late fifteenth-century play *Everyman* or its Middle-Dutch counterpart *Elckerlijc* where 'Die Doot' is very much the great leveller of the *dansc macabre*: 'Paeus, hertoghe, coninc noch grave / En spare ic nie nae Gods ghebieden'.\(^{121}\) The same motif occurs in the Middle-English play *The Pride of Life*, dating from the first half of the fifteenth century, where we are told by the Prolocutor that 'Det dot not spar / Knytis, cayser, ne kyng'.\(^{122}\) In *Elckerlijc*, as in *Everyman*, the main character is a human being who is forced to learn that only his 'Duecht' or Good Deeds will save him since he has not only lost his childish innocence but also succumbed to sins as an adult. One is almost reminded of the infant who cannot speak, for the epilogue reminds the audience that when it comes to facing Death, 'daer en baet voerspraec noch tale'.\(^{123}\) Some morality plays start not with the sinful adult but with the very beginning of human existence, *e.g.* *Mundus et Infans* in which newborn *Infans* prepares himself for his voyage through life to his ultimate goal, death:

```plaintext
Now to seek death I must begin,  
For to pass that strait passage  
For body and soul, that shall then twin  
And make a parting of that marriage.\(^{124}\)
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Philippa Tristram felt that 'in this speech, life becomes an inverted birth, an attempt to return through "that strayte passage" to the womb of the earth in which the living creature will be unmade'.\(^{125}\)

Like many medieval preachers, playwrights often chose to concentrate on the already corrupted adult who is made to recognize the error of his ways and the need for repentance before death; this is why *Mundus et Infans* is so unusual in beginning instead with the innocent infant who is soon to be tempted to his downfall by the sinful world. In fact, medieval audiences would have been able to witness this corruption of a human being from innocence - at least once baptized -

\(^{120}\) Spinrad (1987) 50.
\(^{121}\) The late fifteenth-century play *Elckerlijc*, ll. 108-9, in Hoort wat men u spelen zal: Toneelstukken uit de middeleeuwen, Spectrum van de Nederlandse Letterkunde (Utrecht/Antwerpen, 1968, repr. 1975). The English version has here (ll. 125-26): 'I set not by gold, silver, nor riches, / Nor by pope, emperor, king, duke, nor princes'.
\(^{122}\) *The Pride of Life*, in Norman Davis (1970) II. 55-56.
\(^{123}\) *Elckerlijc*, l. 868. Transl.: mediation nor argument will be of benefit there. The word 'tale' is interesting as it refers to the art of reasoning as well as to simply speech or the ability to speak.
\(^{124}\) Lester (1981), II. 36-39.
\(^{125}\) Tristram (1976) 181.
to sin, and been left to consider how an earlier arrival of Death might have prevented this fall into temptation. However, _Mundus et Infans_ is not the only play to start thus for there is a similar scene in the almost contemporary morality play _The Castle of Perseverance_. Here we find a dramatized parallel to the Dance of Death theme of the walking or dancing newborn when Humanum Genus introduces himself in scene IV:

Dis nyth I was of my modyr born. 
From my modyr I walke, I wende, 
Ful feynt and febyl I fare 
30 befom. 
I am nakyd of lym and lende (ll. 276-79)\textsuperscript{126}

In addition to the symbolic nakedness of Humanum Genus, the author has emphasized in this speech his weak and helpless state.

As we have seen, Death also made his appearance in the medieval mystery plays, as when he appears with his spear in the N-Town play of the Massacre to carry off both Herod and his soldiers; arriving in the midst of Herod's triumphant banquet, Death not only punishes Herod for his pride and sin but also delivers a powerful address to the audience.\textsuperscript{127} Moreover, as other authors have pointed out before, some medieval Last Judgement plays also carry strong overtones of the Dance of Death in their presentation of the different classes of society and their ultimate fates.\textsuperscript{128} Yet this is not the only instance in which there is an apparent influence of the _danse macabre_ on Middle-English religious drama. In the Chester play of the Massacre of the Innocents, as quoted in chapter 4, the repeated macabre joke made by the second soldier about teaching one of the infants to 'hopp uppon my speare' may at first sight just reflect the way he plans to kill the threatened infant. As we have seen, the motif of infants' bodies impaled on the swords and spears of Herod's soldiers was all too common in medieval art, and older than the earliest mystery plays, although dramatic performances may in their turn have influenced depictions in art. Despite the fact that artists and authors assign a variety of weapons to Herod's soldiers, the Chester soldier specifically refers to his spear, which also happens to be one of Death's favourite weapons; in Chaucer's _Pardoner's Tale_ (ll. 675-77), for example, Death is a 'privee theef' who with his spear strikes people's hearts in two. The spear, or sometimes a huge arrow, can be

\textsuperscript{126} From the early fifteenth-century morality play _The Castle of Perseverance_, in Eccles (1969) ll. 288-91.

\textsuperscript{127} See Woolf (1980) 210-11 and n. 84; as Woolf explains, the spear is not actually mentioned but as the stage direction 'Mors interficiat herodem et duos milites' suggests a weapon, the spear is the most likely choice for the stage.

\textsuperscript{128} See Woolf (1980) 295 and n. 95, who mentions in this respect the Chester Cycle and examples on the Continent such as the French _Le Jour du jugement_.

observed as one of Death's attributes in many scenes throughout different versions of the *danse macabre*, starting with Guyot Marchant's, and was to become a more general attribute of Death in late-medieval and renaissance art.\textsuperscript{129} One may find Death with his spear on English tomb monuments and brasses,\textsuperscript{130} but particularly relevant in this context is the incised tomb slab of 1557 at Nieuwkapelle (Belgium), which shows the swaddled infant figure of Ghisiaenike van de Kerove being pierced by the arrow of Death who approaches her from behind.\textsuperscript{131} However, the Chester soldier is not merely imitating Death through his spear for his very words are a cruel echo of Death's exhortation to the infant in the *danse macabre* to dance, even when he cannot walk. The Chester soldier will 'teach him a play', just as in Lydgate's version Death also promises to teach the child to dance: *'Lerne of newe to [gon] on this daunce'*. The word 'hopp' itself is intriguing as it also occurs in the words of Death to the cook in what may be the oldest German *Totentanz* text, as printed in the Heidelberg blockbook edition of 1465: *'Hoppe o ff'*.\textsuperscript{132} However, the sentiment itself is much older and quite familiar, as the infant in the *danse macabre* so frequently complains in vain: *'debo saltare, qui numquam scivi meare', 'nw mus ich tanczen vnd kan noch nicht gan'*. 

**The continuation of the theme of the Dance of Death**

Best known as a combination of images and moralistic verses, the *danse macabre* became an artistic motif in its own right which could be confined to much smaller groups of pairs or perhaps even individual scenes, in as far as one can trust some of the surviving evidence. From the 1480s on it also became a popular motif to use in the decorated margins of books of hours, without the need of a text to explain its meaning; they are usually found amongst the prayers for the dead and often come in three pairs in gothic arcading above each other per margin; the main printers of such hours with *danse macabre* decorations are Simon Vostre, Thielman Kerver and Antoine Vérard, the latter probably also being responsible for the luxury parchment edition of the Parisian *danse macabre*.\textsuperscript{133} Simon Vostre's printed Hours for the use of Besançon of c. 1512 show an example of such marginal scenes in which the skeletal figure of Death, armed with a spear or a huge arrow, confronts a variety of social types as bystanders look on. Amongst these, there is one in which

\textsuperscript{129} Enklaar (1950) 106ff, who points out that whereas musical instruments for Death have a German origin, the spear occurs instead in French versions from Guyot Marchant's on.  
\textsuperscript{130} For example, on the brass of John Rudyng (d. 1481) in St Andrew's church, Biggleswade (Bedfordshire); see William Lack, H Martin Stuchfield and Philip Whittemore, *The Monumental Brasses of Bedfordshire* (London, 1992) 12-13.  
\textsuperscript{131} Greenhill (1976) vol. 2, pl. 153a.  
\textsuperscript{132} See Kaiser (1983) 'Der oberdeutsche vierzeilige Totentanz', 320, l. 2.  
\textsuperscript{133} See Hammerstein (1980) 177.
Death has entered a room in which an infant lies sleeping; with his arrow hovering above, Death is pulling the child by its leg from its rocking cradle as two small figures huddle in a corner watching the scene. Another French book of hours in Oxford (Bodleian Library, MS Douce 135), dating from the second quarter of the sixteenth century and lavishly illuminated by hand, contains a very full set of danse macabre scenes, in as far as one can call it a dance at all, with elaborate self-contained scenes in the bottom margins, while in the outer margin of each verso page the figure of Death is shown threatening another type in the outer recto margin.\textsuperscript{134} In the bottom margin on f. 87v Death interrupts the ball-game of two youngsters who are labelled as \textit{ludens}; meanwhile the skeletal figure with its arrow in the outer margin above gestures a warning to the figure labelled \textit{infans} on f. 88, who lies naked in a rocking cradle, his hands raised above the covers in helpless resignation.

This expansion from single pairs of Death and victim into complete self-contained scenes is an interesting development. Although clearly of medieval origin, the danse macabre continued to inspire artists well after the Reformation. It was undoubtedly the Großbasel \textit{Totentanz} that inspired probably the most famous version in print, viz. that by Hans Holbein the Younger (1497/8-1543). In 1515 Holbein left his native Augsburg - which possessed its own \textit{Totentanz} - for Basel where the Großbasel wall-painting provided a number of motifs for his own treatments of the theme. These included an alphabet with figures derived from the danse, in which Y stands for \textit{ynfans}, and a design for a silver dagger sheath decorated with six danse macabre pairs, amongst which a naked infant vainly struggling against Death's firm grip on his right arm.\textsuperscript{135} His most important work on the theme was the \textit{Großer Totentanz}, as it is often called, which was developed over a number of years in the 1520s. Most of Holbein's types were probably already in existence before 1527 and we know that Hans Lutzelbürger at Basel was commissioned by the Lyons printer Melchior Trechsel to produce fifty-one designs by Holbein as woodcuts; however, when Lutzelbürger died in 1526, only forty-one of Holbein's designs had been completed as woodcuts and these were not

\textsuperscript{134} This manuscript was part of a large collection of works on the Dance of Death owned by Francis Douce, who was clearly fascinated by the subject; see the exhibition catalogue \textit{The Douce Legacy: An Exhibition to Commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the Bequest of Francis Douce (1757-1834)} (Oxford, 1984) 101-6 and esp. cat. 156.

\textsuperscript{135} See Clark (1950) 69 and Appendix A, 116. Clark mentioned six pairs on the sheath but named only five: king, queen, mercenary, matron and mendicant friar. The date of the sketch, which is preserved in the Basel Museum, is unknown; a copy of the design for the sheath is shown in Chr. Mechel, \textit{Der Todontanz oder Triumph des Todes von Hans Holbein mit 48 getreuen nach den Original-Holzschnitten in Kupfer gestochenen Blättern} (Uttweil am Bodensee, 1839) no. 48.
published until 1538. This first woodcut edition, printed at Lyons as *Les simulachres & historiees face de la mort*, is accompanied by two texts per image.

Holbein introduced his *Totentanz* with four scenes from Genesis; Death makes his first appearance in the Expulsion scene and accompanies Adam tilling the soil in the next while Eve is seated in the background suckling her child. The fifth scene depicts a horde of musical skeletons, representing the bones of all men. Thus, in this prologue to the *danse macabre* proper, Holbein shows Death as the inevitable consequence of the Fall; the whole series concludes with two final woodcuts depicting the Last Judgement and the escutcheon of Death. In between, Holbein portrayed thirty-four types from both sexes and all ranks of society, who are all preyed upon or already being snatched away by Death; all individual scenes in their own characteristic settings, these are not so much episodes in a true Dance but rather images from life, often showing a sardonic sense of humour on the part of the artist. The child is the last of Death's victims in Holbein's *Totentanz*; the skeletal figure of Death has a firm grip on the child's left arm as he crosses the threshold of the bare hut, in which a mother is cooking a meal on the floor. Both the mother and a smaller male figure standing next to her - probably an older brother - look on helplessly in utter horror as Death drags off the youngest member of the family, who turns back to his family with a futile gesture appealing for help. Their response is the traditional gesture of despair and anguish, displayed so often by the mothers in scenes of the Massacre: clutching their heads or hair while the wide-open mouths and faces betray their feelings further. In comparison, the small child with his mouth barely open and the powerless wave of his plump arm seems almost mute, just as an *infans* would be who cannot yet walk or talk properly.

Holbein's child is not the traditional naked infant but still merely a toddler, only dressed in a practical shift and being forced by the skeletal figure of Death to walk on his naked baby-plump little legs. The text above the woodcut is from Job 14:1-2 and reads:

Homo natus de muliere, breui viuens tempore
repletur multis miserijs, qui quasi flos egrediit,& conteritur,& fugit velut vmbra.

The French version underneath runs as follows:

Tout homme de la femme yssant
Remply de misere,& d' encombre,
Ainsi que fleur tost finissant.
Sort & puis fuyt comme fait l'umble.  

In both texts, the symbols of the evanescent flower and the fleeting shadow are used as comparisons to the healthy looking, but vulnerable child who beckons in vain for help.

Astonishingly, this scene has been interpreted rather differently by some authors. In his edition of Holbein's version, Clark described the 'speechless grief' of the peasant woman in this scene but then added: 'The infant turns back to wave a tiny hand to its mother'. Tristram went even further in her interpretation for, after discussing the humanity of Death's words to Holbein's Labourer and the latter's regretful but resigned response, she commented:

The following illustration, of Death and the Child, has similar qualities, for whilst the mother and an older sibling express their anguish from the fireside where supper is cooking, the toddler turns back from the door to wave a cheerful and affectionate farewell, whilst his other hand is grasped protectively by the skeleton who leads him over the threshold.

However, the image of the skeletal hand on the plump wrist of the young child does not suggest protectiveness so much as cruel fate, and the child's terrified appearance and body language indicate little sign of cheerfulness. Phoebe Spinrad also underestimated the horror of the scene in describing the child as merely 'puzzled'. Although somewhat out of place in a poor hut, an hourglass was included by Holbein in the bottom right corner as an additional reminder of the transitoriness of life. It is interesting to note that later editions of 1549 and 1562 not only contained new prints of additional types but also seven allegorical scenes that all featured mostly naked putti; amongst these, the first Allegory of Victory shows a naked putto-like 'infant' armed with a shield and a huge arrow - a traditional attribute of Death, as we have seen.

Many modern authors have preferred the idea that Death is not the great equalizer who is cruel to all but instead displays a modicum of sympathy towards the poor and weak, especially to the young child. While the reminder that an early death spares the infant the sorrows of a longer life is at best conventional cold comfort, some have cited this as at least some consolation offered to the child by a not unsympathetic Death; Tristram's comments on Lydgate's verses as quoted earlier are a good example. Visual signs of such special treatment are also often a

139 Tristram (1976) 169-70.
141 Clark included these later additions in his 1947 edition of Holbein's danse macabre series but remarked, 28, of these later 'putti' or children in the Renaissance style' that they 'do not belong to the Dance of Death at all; they were just inserted to swell the total number of engravings'. Although putti are not really children, their inclusion in repeated allegories of victory bring to mind Death's ultimate failure to defeat Nature in the Roman de la Rose.
matter of interpretation: as we have seen, Mâle remarked of the Dance of Death at
La Chaise-Dieu that its artist showed his greatness particularly in the scene where
Death appears to be concealing his face from the infant as if ashamed.\textsuperscript{142} Clearly
thinking of the same image, Tristram also preferred to see some social justice in
Death:

\begin{quote}
The Dance, which may possibly develop from [the Legend of the Three Living and
the Three Dead], no longer prompts men to choose, but forces them to submit to
the inevitable; it allows, however, for a wider range of social comment than the
Legend, for each Death is personal, and arrests individuals in an appropriate form.
Thus the poor who have nothing to lose, the good who are at peace with God, the
old who are weary for the grave, even the innocent child from whom the skeleton
shields its face, do not feel terror at its approach; it is the proud, the rich and the
powerful, those who, as Langland would say, enjoy their reward in this life, who
feel the full menace of its coming.\textsuperscript{143}
\end{quote}

She forgot to mention, however, the injustice both towards the very young who
may be spared great misery in life but also its beauty and the chance to attain their
full bloom, and towards those on the threshold of maturity who are snatched away
before they can enjoy the fullness of life.

Although many of the murals in England have been lost, the theme of the
Dance of Death survived the Reformation in other forms. One late example is the
illustrated poem 'The Daunce and Song of Death', which was printed in an
Elizabethan broadsheet.\textsuperscript{144} It shows a circular \textit{danse macabre} around a newly dug
grave with three skeletons each leading two figures; the one on the left is leading
two familiar figures from the Ages of Man, \textit{viz.} the child and the old man, the
former naked and the latter leaning on his staff. These two extreme Ages also meet
on one of the late sixteenth-century Foljambe monuments at Chesterfield
(Derbyshire).\textsuperscript{145} Here, with their usual places in the Wheel of Life reversed, the
bent old man on the left is facing the huge naked and chubby figure of the \textit{infans}
with its traditional attribute, the windmill; the semi-skeletal figure of Death with his
arrow and spade separates the two. Thus, the two popular medieval themes of the
Ages of Man and the \textit{danse macabre} were linked in this renaissance monument;
their appeal to artists and moralists alike was to continue, but in rather different
ways.

\textsuperscript{142} Mâle (1986) 341 and pl. 215.
\textsuperscript{143} Tristram (1976) 167.
\textsuperscript{144} See Gray (1972) 224 and pl. 12.
\textsuperscript{145} This monument is one of six family memorials commissioned by Godfrey Foljambe (d.
1595); see Jon Bayliss, 'A Dutch Carver: Garrett Hollemans I in England', \textit{Church Monuments} 8
CONCLUSIONS
Notwithstanding the claims that have often been made about parental indifference in the Middle Ages, and in contrast to the frequent omission of deceased offspring from historical and genealogical research, it would appear that infants and children did occupy a clear place in medieval people's consciousness when it came to mortality. Even though few infants were commemorated in monuments during the medieval period, at least until the later fifteenth century, this fact cannot be used as evidence of indifference. In a way less visible than monuments, parental concern about deceased children was often shown in payments for prayers to be said for their souls, at least by those parents who could afford it; for example, king Stephen and his wife Matilda are recorded as having thus remembered their dead offspring as early as the twelfth century. Similarly, after the death of his daughter Katherine, aged three and a half, on 3 May 1257, king Henry III also showed proper concern for her soul by appointing a chaplain in the chapel of Charing to say daily prayers before proceeding to commission her (now lost) effigy. In death, aristocratic and royal infants - confined to the nursery and therefore rarely present in public life - may have been considered of more private concern to their parents when it came to monuments, but their funerals were often fairly grand and expensive affairs. Deceased children might even be remembered by surviving siblings; in Richard II commissioned a tomb at King's Langley for his elder brother Edward of Angouleme, who had died in childhood. Amongst the lower classes infants would have been much more part of everyday family life, such as it was, and this is how they may make an occasional appearance in surviving documents.

Infants and toddlers were known to be particularly vulnerable, a fact reflected in many miracle reports and coroners' inquests. Accidents were, however, exceptional circumstances compared to the all too common diseases to which infants might fall victim. The dangers of pregnancy and birth, with complicated cases of labour sometimes lasting for days, could easily prove fatal, and it should be remembered that the medical knowledge to ascertain death accurately was often

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146 See Mary Anne Everett Green, Lives of the Princesses of England, from the Norman Conquest, vol. 1 (London, 1950) 192. Their children Matilda and Baldwin are said to have died in infancy and were buried together in Christ's Church, Aldgate; many years after their death, in 1148, their mother Matilda built and endowed the church and hospital of St Katherine's near the Tower in their memory, and their father and surviving brother Eustace also donated money towards prayers for their souls. Of course, unless the dates of birth and death are known, in many such cases it remains unclear whether the offspring thus commemorated died in infancy or later in life.


lacking, resulting in some fortunate instances in 'miraculous' resuscitations. Far from being resigned in the face of infant death, many desperate parents actually sought divine help to bring back to life their newly lost infants, carrying the lifeless little bodies to the altar of their favoured saint; especially with unbaptized neonates, even the faintest sign of life was vital to allow baptism to take place. Weak and helpless, infants may have seemed very much the archetypal victims of death, just as they were so often presented in the Massacre of the Innocents, but this did not make parents indifferent to their children's fate.

Infants may appear curiously absent in so many reports and studies of major epidemics like the Black Death, but they were probably amongst the most common victims; yet likely to succumb to any ailment, perhaps their deaths may have seemed less significant to record to contemporaries to whom the mortality rates amongst the young and strong must have seemed far more shocking. Nonetheless, the naked infant who can neither walk nor talk seems in some ways to have been seen as the archetypal young victim of Death. Thus we find him, alone or with his mother or nurse, as one of the most common types in the Dance of Death. However, whereas most types in the Dance of Death are supposed to be presenting a mirror to their living counterparts in society, the infant cannot be intended in this way; his capture by Death is a warning to adults, not young children. Unlike the high and mighty whom Death seems keen to punish for their presumption, the mother usually bewails her inability to protect her child while the infant himself mourns his early death before he has learnt the most basic human achievements: the ability to walk and talk. Death spares none but perhaps he is somehow more merciful to the infant; weak and helpless, the infant's only solace is the traditional comfort that this early demise will spare him the sorrows of adult life - and also, significantly, the inevitable transition from childish innocence into the temptations and sins of adulthood.

149 The theme of the danse macabre as a mirror is discussed in Jane H M Taylor, 'Un Miroer Salutaire', in Taylor (1984) 29-43.
Chapter 6. CONCLUSIONS: 
'3e pat wepe for childer and frynd'

'Now, Lord, kepe hym both nyght and day
That neuer dessese nor noo fray
Cume to my chyld in noo place.'

'And euermore, goode Lord, gramercy
Pat my childe is not kylled.'

In 1907 Elizabeth Godfrey concluded her book on English children in the past with the following image:

So we see the long train of laughing children pass - Saxon, Norman, Tudor.
Truly, the children of long ago seem to have had a merry time of it.

This view is very much a sentimental one, and typical of the period in which it was written; it confidently presents childhood as a happy golden time in which children laugh and play, based on a belief that children will always be children and that there really once was a 'merry old England'. As such, it is quite different from the grim picture painted by more recent historians such as deMause in his insistence that the history of childhood is a veritable 'nightmare', or from the still widely accepted view of the past as described by popular writers:

In the Middle Ages, childhood was a period to be hurried through, to be left as soon as possible. [...] No one was sentimental about children in the Middle Ages, nor was child development thought to be of much interest, so the subject rarely figures in contemporary works.

As this dissertation has tried to show, the subject of childhood and child development does figure in medieval culture and one can find the image of the child invoked in sentimental ways. However, is it equally possible to refute the claim that 'childhood was a period to be hurried through'?

The image of the child in medieval culture is often quite ambiguous. Two authors recently observed: 'L'enfance est [...] un objet d'histoire extrêmement difficile à appréhender puisque nous ne la saisissions quasiment jamais in vivo mais

1 Abraham in the Brome Play of Abraham and Isaac, in Davis (1970) ll. 23-25.
3 Godfrey (1907) 162.
4 Ashdown (1979) 15.
seulement à travers les traces que les adultes nous en ont laissées.\textsuperscript{5} It will have become clear that these 'traces' are open to different interpretations. Depicted in the arms of his mother, the Christ child is sometimes rather like an attribute by which the Virgin can be identified yet the figure of the Christ child clearly became an important religious object by itself in the medieval period, with statuettes and jésueaux providing a focus for sometimes extreme signs of devotion. However, while resembling an earthly infant, the Christ child was at the same time the omnipotent Son of God. When the infant Jesus managed to subdue the dragons during the Flight into Egypt, according to the influential Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, he reminded his alarmed parents of his true nature: 'Fear not, neither conceive that I am a child, for I always was and am a perfect man'.\textsuperscript{6} Medieval literature and art frequently allude to the fact that the Virgin's joy in her son would eventually change into sorrow when she lost him to the cross; Middle-English lyrics clearly state this fact even when they purport to be lullabies of the Virgin to her son, while some paintings of the Madonna and Child show the naked child lying asleep across his mother's lap in a pose that prefigures the Pietà.\textsuperscript{7}

Children might be presented as charming and a joy to their parents, but there was a clear realization that in real life they were vulnerable beings. Medieval writers were mindful of the fact that earthly delights are shortlived and must pass all too soon, just as

\begin{quote}
[...] al fleischli loue schal fare
As dooj je flouris of may,
And schal be lastande na mare
But as it were an hour of a day\textsuperscript{8}
\end{quote}

While sexual love and the flowers of May often go together, 'fleshly love' also referred to earthly love for one's offspring, and the vulnerability of infants was often compared to the fragile and ephemeral nature of flowers. Earthly love was, of course, dangerous to indulge in, as preachers and moralists were apt to remind their audiences; once baptized, little children were at least without sin and therefore ready to face death, unlike sinful adults who saw death as the end of life and earthly enjoyment. This is the type of sentiment expressed in the 1420s by John Audelay in a long poem De visitacione infirmorum et consolacione miserorum:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{5} Egle Becchi and Dominique Julia (1998) 33.
\textsuperscript{6} Pseudo-Matthew 18, in James (1924) 75.
\textsuperscript{7} See Gray (1972) esp. 112-21. Similarly, a miniature figure of the Pietà on a Netherlandish jésseau of c. 1480-1500 in the Burrell Collection, Glasgow, provides a visual link between Christ's infancy and passion.
\textsuperscript{8} From 'The Love of Jesus', ll. 113-16, in Furnivall (1895) 25.
\end{quote}
However, these frequently expressed warnings are a reminder that medieval people were actually apt to forget these higher goals when faced with earthly joys as well as sorrows, and popular presentations of the Massacre at Bethlehem actually focussed on the tragedy of the event rather than the glory of the Innocents' martyrdom.

Once cleansed of original sin through baptism, infants and young children were considered to be innocent and pure, which clearly contained a pre-Freudian connotation with sexual innocence; the general feeling was that the younger the child, the more innocent it must be. Yet experience, even if leading to sin, was also considered beneficial, for the infant was weak and immature; adulthood was judged to be much closer to perfection, both in depictions of the Ages of Man and at the Resurrection. Just as one's offspring might stand a better chance of surviving once they had passed the precarious stage of (early) childhood and grown into young adults, so all Mankind could look forward to enjoying eternal life in a state of adult perfection. In Christian thought there seemed to be no special distinction for children in Heaven, and Paul promised in Ephesians 4:14 'that henceforth we be no more children tossed to and fro'. Philippa Tristram felt that in the Middle-English poem Pearl the brevity of earthly existence is compensated in Heaven, which is presented as a land where 'primavera è sempre'.

In the imagination which sees this life as continuous with the next, the signs offered by the temporal world are incomplete, rather than contradictory; they are imperfect suggestions which eternity will render as perfect realities. Thus in Pearl the temporal child is described by that recurrent emblem of transience, 'a rose / That flowered and fayled as kynde hyt gef; but beyond the river of death she flowers perpetually, whilst the process of decay remains, as her father comments, the mark of those living who inhabit time:

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9 Whiting (1931) no. 11, ll. 365-377.
10 Tristram (1976) 186.
I am bot mokke and mul among,
And thou so rych a reken rose,
And bydes here by this blysful bonc
Ther lyves lyste may never lose.

The Pearl maiden has been transformed from a transient little girl into a heavenly bride of Christ, armed with the wisdom to counsel the Dreamer about the futility of earthly love as opposed to the ultimate reward of divine love.

*Caritas*, the foremost of the three theological virtues, originally combined the love of God (*amor dei*) with the love of one's neighbour (*amor proximi*); as such, it was personified by a female figure holding a flame or flaming heart as a reminder of divine love, while a second attribute such as a cornucopia or bowl of fruit could refer to earthly charity. Nicola Pisano's sculpted figure of *Caritas* as a woman with a child on the baptistery pulpit in Pisa of 1259 remained exceptional until the first half of the fourteenth century when it emerged as the new iconographical personification; eventually *Caritas* or Charity came to be depicted as a woman surrounded by naked infants, one of which she may actually give suck. In other words, although the image may originally be based on the *Virgo lactans*, the virtue of *Caritas* developed into a figure epitomizing earthly, maternal love.

Whereas the infants surrounding *Caritas* are often rather putto-like in their chubbiness, especially in Italian art, some of their northern counterparts tend to be more like the long-limbed children discussed in chapter 2; Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472-1553) even included an elaborately dressed doll as the typical attribute of a little girl in his late painting of 'Charitas' in the National Gallery, London. These three children by Cranach are thus individualized infants and not at all like conventional putti. In fact, the putto, re-emerging in renaissance Italy as part of the rediscovery of Antiquity, is not really a child at all but an anomaly, its knowingly naughty and precocious behaviour in total contrast to its appearance of a chubby infant; it became a favourite decorative device but its wings as well as its behaviour distinguished it from the natural infant. As we have seen, in northern Europe there was instead the naked *infans* frolicking around without wings and often merely playing with toys typical for its age. Although the theme of the winged putto with a skull developed in Italy as a contemplative device, in the North it lost its wings as Hoefnagel's miniature also shows, making it reminiscent of the earlier antithesis between the figures of the *infans* and *senectus/decrepitus*, or *generatio* and *corruptio*, in depictions of the Ages of Man. However, even this antithesis is

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13 See Janson (1937); also Seznec (1937-38).
ambiguous as there is weakness and vulnerability on both extremes of the Wheel of Life.

In the North, the native *infans* eventually made way for the imported Italian putto; winged and chubby, this figure became a regular feature on tomb monuments, no longer happy and playful but often weeping tears over the commemorated dead. There is even a winged putto holding a skull on the seventeenth-century monument of Christian, Lady St John, and her infant son John Paulet at Staveley (Derbyshire); the appearance of the putto seems to bear little relation to the little swathed infant lying beside his mother. Yet the winged putto was not just a playful motif for already in Antiquity it had merged with the Roman *genius* or guardian spirit, and as such it had been adopted in early Christian art; thus it could be either the frivolous attendant of Cupid and Venus or act as yet another type of angel in religious art. The Italianate border around the Massacre scene in the Hours of Louis d'Orléans of c. 1490 shows putto-like figures, but with long angels' wings. Eventually, the putto came to represent the soul of a deceased child, not just in family portraits but also in religious painting, for this is how Poussin presented the Innocents in his mid seventeenth-century painting *The Flight into Egypt* (Dulwich Art Gallery): naked putti hovering among the clouds above the heads of the Holy Family, with the young Christ gazing up at the cross they are holding - a logical combination, as one author explained, 'in that the martyrdom of the Holy Innocents, which occasioned the flight, foreshadowed the Crucifixion'. Poussin's painting also illustrates a clear move away from the bloodied corpses of the Massacre to a more acceptable presentation of the Innocents as blissful angels in Heaven. Sentimentalization of a once so tragic and bloody event reached its zenith in the painting *The Triumph of the Innocents* of 1875-87 (Liverpool, Walker Art Gallery) by the Pre-Raphaelite artist William Holman Hunt.

This post-medieval development of the Innocents from savaged corpses into heavenly putti is curious if one remembers the earlier dogma that all souls would assume the perfect age of Christ at the Resurrection, including children; as we have seen, Aelfric specifically stated that the Holy Innocents would be rewarded with

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14 Wife of Charles, Lord St John, Baron of Razinge, Christian died in childbirth on 22 July 1653 and her son seven days later; according to the inscription, the monument was erected by her father John Frecheville, Esq.
16 For example, the five little angels in the sky in Jan Mijtens' 1652 portrait of Willem van den Kerckhoven and his family in the Haags Historisch Museum, The Hague; see *Kinderen van alle tijden*, pl. 22.
18 In his famous painting in the Galleria Spada in Rome, Pietro Testa depicted both the Massacre below and the Innocents' souls floating away as putti in a cloud; see Mitchell (1937-38) pl. 61c.
adult maturity in Heaven even though they failed to attain adulthood on earth. It would seem that, although the idea of a perfect age in Heaven might have held great appeal for adults, at some point in time the belief in a similar age for children must have started to waver. Of course, the emergence of the *limbo puerorum* already indicated a need for a special solution for unbaptized children who would otherwise be damned forever, but otherwise children rarely - if ever - figure in depictions of the Resurrection. In this respect, Enguerrand Quarton's painting of the Coronation of the Virgin in the museum at Villeneuve-lès-Avignon shows an interesting departure in that it features two rows of near-naked little children kneeling in front of the saints in heaven, their nudity - the traditional garb of innocent infancy - only covered by a large garland of flowers and foliage. Their prominent position amongst the saints as well as their large numbers might at first suggest that they represent the Holy Innocents but this appears to be incorrect, for in the bottom left corner of the painting Quarton included another set of nude infants individually covered by garlands; these kneeling figures represent, in fact, those children who died unbaptized and whose souls are thus condemned to the *limbo puerorum*. Interestingly, the original detailed contract for this painting, which was commissioned on 23 April 1453 by canon Jean de Montagnac for an altar to the Holy Trinity in the Carthusian church at Villeneuve-lès-Avignon, makes no specific mention of any infants - baptized or not - although the inclusion of cherubim and seraphim is specifically required. Instead, the contract leaves the population of heaven, purgatory and hell largely to the painter's discretion: 'Item, doit avoir en paradiz dessusdit de tous estas du monde à l'ordonnance dudit mestre Enguerand' and 'Item, en Purgatoire et en Enfert aura de tous estas, selon l'adviz dudit maistre Enguerand'. In Quarton's vision, all estates of the world clearly included children.

Quarton's painting brings us near the end of the medieval period, to a time when family and kinship had become much more important, especially among the bourgeoisie; this is witnessed by the growing cult of St Anne and the presentation of the Holy Kinship, with Christ and the apostles being depicted as playful *infantes*. Yet even during the earlier Middle Ages there was a feeling that infants were special beings with their own distinct characteristics who deserved special

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21 Sterling (1983) 201-2, document 8, items 10 and 23.
22 See, for example, Ton Brandenbarg, *Heilig familieleven: Verspreiding en waardering van de Historie van Sint-Anna in de stedelijke cultuur in de Nederlanden en het Rijnland aan het begin van de moderne tijd (15de/16de eeuw)* (Nijmegen, 1990); *Heilige Anna, Grote Moeder: De Cultus van de Heilige Moeder Anna en haar familie in de Nederlanden en aangrenzende streken*, exhibition catalogue Museum voor Religieuze Kunst Uden (Nijmegen, 1992).
6. CONCLUSIONS

...treatment in Heaven as well as on earth. The _limbo puerorum_ was clearly a solution born out of necessity in the face of the high rate of mortality amongst infants and their parents' anguish at their potential damnation. The Holy Innocents were another distinct group: although in one sense protomartyrs dying in Christ's place, there seems to have been a general feeling that they would make ideal companions in Heaven for other deceased children, perhaps not as perfect adults but more like heavenly infants. After all, Christ specifically instructed people in Matthew 18:2-4 to 'become as little children' in order to enter the kingdom of Heaven. As we saw earlier, Vincent of Beauvais already related in the mid thirteenth century how the little boy from Speyer, who tried to share his bread with an image of the Christ child, would find himself feasting with the Innocents in Heaven. This idea clearly had a long-term appeal as the inscription on the brass at Windsor to William King, who died in 1633 aged ten weeks, describes his parents' belief that whereas the worms will feast on their son's earthly remains, his soul will 'feast with innocents, thus from the brest, ravish't by Death'.

Even Christ may have adapted himself to the Innocents' needs in popular imagination, not just allowing them their age of innocence from which they were so cruelly snatched but even joining them in their childish play. In the period 1343-49, the German lay author Hermann von Fritzlar wrote a series of _Heiligenleben_, or saints' lives, in which he copied a sermon 'De innocentibus' from an earlier collection of _Mitteldeutsche Predigten_, which appears originally to have been written in Latin and translated into a Middle-German dialect in the second half of the late twelfth century. After describing the Massacre, Hermann and his earlier source presented a reassuring image of the Innocents' reward in Heaven: 'Si hänt aber nu den tröst des ewigen lîbes und sint des kindes spilgenôze worden dâ zu himele'. Perhaps, then, a similar fate awaited the deceased _infans_ in medieval popular thought: to continue eternal life in playful innocence, even when life on earth so often proved too short.

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24 The collection _Mitteldeutsche Predigten_ is largely unknown; I am grateful for this information to Mr Tobias A Kemper, University of Bonn, who is studying this particular sermon.
25 The quotation, attributed to Hermann von Fritzlar, was found in Gray (1974) 22. Transl.: But they now have the comfort of eternal life and have become the playfellows of the [Christ] child there in Heaven.
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94 b. Carved stone lid of the sarcophagus of the Infanta Blanca de Nájera (d. 1156): back.

94 c. Massacre of the Innocents: detail of the back of the sarcophagus lid.


95 b. Massacre of the Innocents, illustrating a description of the 1572 massacre of St Bartholomew in Paris, on p. 746 of the Sechsische Chronica printed in 1588.

96. Massacre of the Innocents, c. 1320-30, in an illuminated manuscript of the apocryphal Infancy of Christ (Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Selden Supra 38, I, f. 4).


98. Massacre of the Innocents, with Christ's entry into Jerusalem below, leaf from a twelfth-century picture bible from the Rhine or Meuse region (Frankfurt am Main, Hirsch collection).

99 a. Tomb slabs at Barbeau Abbey of Jean and Thibaut de Sancerre, twin brothers who drowned c. 1236 while swimming in the river; Gaignières drawings (Paris, BN Pe 11a, f. 126; Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Gough-Drawings Gaignières).


100 a. Baptism with Death as godfather, illumination from a manuscript copy of c. 1400 of Hugo von Trimberg's didactic poem Der Renner (c. 1300) (Leiden Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS Vossius G.G.F. 4, f. 247v).

100 b. Death, the mother and the infant, from a literary and historical compilation manuscript on paper by Jean Miélot, Lille, 1468 (Paris, BN ms. fr. 17001, f. 110v).


101 b. Death and the infant, followed by Death and the mother, antiquarian watercolour (detail) made by Emanuel Büchel in 1768 of the since lost 'Kleinbasel' Dance of Death mural of c. 1460-80 at the Dominican nunnery in Klingenthal, Basel (Kunstmuseum Basel, Kupferstichkabinett).

102a-b. Dance of Death fresco, probably c. 1500-10, originally situated on the walls of the charnel-house at Metnitz (Carnithia), with detail.

102 c. Dance of Death (detail) showing Death taking the infant from his cradle on the far left, 1490, wall-painting by Johannes von Kastav at St Trojstva church, Hrastovlje (Istria).

103 a. Death and the infant, woodblock, from a Totentanz printed by Heinrich Knoblochtzer in c. 1485 at either Strasbourg or Heidelberg.

103 b. Death snatching the infant from his rocking cradle, in a Totentanz manuscript of c. 1470 (Kassel, Landesbibliothek Ms. poet. et roman. 5).

104 b. Death and the infant in his cradle, c. 1490, detail from the mural in the parish church at Meslay-le-Grenet (near Chartres).


105 b. *Danse macabre* (detail), wall-painting of c. 1500 on the north wall of the nave in the parish church at La Ferté-Loupière (Burgundy).

106. Death and the infant, detail of the large version of the Paris *danse macabre* by Antoine Vérand, 1490 (Paris, BN, Cabinet des Estampes, Te. 8 rés. C21297-21301).

107 a. The *infans* between a mature adult and an old man, in one of the sculpted Dance of Death friezes of c. 1534-37 at Dresden, Georgenschlöß.

107 b. Death and the swaddled infant (right), c. 1465-70(?), on the north wall of the choir in the abbey church of St Robert, La Chaise-Dieu (Haute Loire).


108 b. The mother with her swaddled infant in Death's dance, c. 1480, *Totentanz* in a compilation manuscript by the Augsburg humanist Sigismund Gossembrot (Munich, Staatsbibliothek clm. 3941).

109 a. Death and the mother in the Großbasel 'Death of Basel' in the Predigerkloster, probably painted shortly after the 1439 plague, since destroyed, here preserved in a copper engraving published by Matthäus Merian in 1621.

109 b. Detail of a 1773 watercolour copy of the Großbasel 'Death of Basel', showing Death and the mother.

110. Death and the Fool, followed by Death and the mother with her infant, wall-painting on the churchyard wall of the Dominican convent in Berne, originally painted between 1516 and 1520 by Niklaus Manuel, here preserved through a gouache copy of 1649.

111. Mother and child in a *Totentanz* painted on canvas by Jakob von Wyl for the Jesuit college at Lucerne around 1615.

112. Death and 'la jeune fille' in an illuminated manuscript of the *Danse macabre des femmes*, attributed to the anonymous Master of Philippe of Guelders (active c. 1495-1510) (Paris, BN ms. fr. 995, f. 38v).

113. Death and 'la femme veufve' in an illuminated manuscript of the *Danse macabre des femmes* (BN ms. fr. 995, f. 29v).


115. Death and the wetnurse in an illuminated manuscript of the *Danse macabre des femmes* (BN ms. fr. 995, f. 34v).

116. Tomb monument commissioned on 29 March 1462 by René d'Anjou from the sculptor Pons Poncet for his wetnurse Tiphaine la Magine (d. 1458) at the church of Nantilly, Saumur (Gaignières drawing, BN Cabinet des Estampes Rés. Pe. I, f. 8).

117. Death and 'la femme grosse' in an illuminated manuscript of the *Danse macabre des femmes* (BN ms. fr. 995, f. 32v).
118 a. Death striking a swaddled infant with his arrow, 1557, incised tomb slab of Ghisiaenike
van de Kerove at Nieuwkapelle (Belgium).

118 b. Three *danse macabre* scenes, including Death and the infant, marginal decorations in a book
of hours printed by Simon Vostre in c. 1512.

118 c. Allegory of Victory, added to the 1549 and 1562 editions of Holbein's *Totentanz*.

119. *Danse macabre* scenes in the borders of a French book of hours, second quarter of the
sixteenth century (Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 135, f. 87v-88), with detail.

120 a. Design for a silver dagger sheath decorated with six *danse macabre* pairs, including the
infant, 1839 engraving after the original drawing in the Basel Museum.

120 b. *Totentanz* alphabet with Y for *ynfans*, 1520s, by Hans Holbein the Younger.

120 c. Death and the infant, from Hans Holbein's *Großer Totentanz*, published in 1538 as *Les
simulachres & historiees face de la mort*.

121 a. The infant and the old man in 'The Daunce and Song of Death', Elizabethan broadsheet.

121 b. Old age and the infant flanking Death, sculpted decoration on one of the late sixteenth-
century Foljambe monuments in St Mary and All Saints' church at Chesterfield
(Derbyshire).

122. The miracle of the dead infant being brought back to life after its mother persisted in
praying to a statue of the Virgin, from Jean Miélot's collection of *Miracles de la Glorieuse

123. Enguerrand Quarton's *Coronation of the Virgin*, commissioned by canon Jean de
Montagnac on 23 April 1453.

124. The baptized children among the saints in Heaven: detail (right side) of Enguerrand
Quarton's *Coronation of the Virgin* (Musée de Villeneuve-lès-Avignon).

125 a. The baptized children among the saints in Heaven: detail (left side) of Enguerrand
Quarton's *Coronation of the Virgin* (Musée de Villeneuve-lès-Avignon).

125 b. The unbaptized children in Limbo: detail (bottom left corner) of Enguerrand Quarton's
*Coronation of the Virgin*.

126. Monument of Christian, Lady St John (d. 22 July 1653), and her newborn son John
Paulet, in Staveley parish church (Derbyshire), with detail of the putto with a skull on the
left.
a. Detail of the tomb slab of Francis Tanfield (d. 1558) and his wife at Gayton (Northamptonshire), showing four deceased 'chrysom' children among the living sons.

b. Tomb stones of the Baker and Comport infants in the churchyard at Cooling (Kent), dating between 1767 and 1854.
3 a. Tomb at Tours Cathedral (originally in the Abbaye St Martin) of Charles Orland (d. 1495) and Charles (d. 1496), infant sons of Charles VIII of France and his wife Anne of Brittany.


3 c. Birth of Henry VI on 6 December 1421, from 'The Pageant of the Birth, Life and Death of Richard Beauchamp, earl of Warwick' (BL Cotton MS Julius E iv, Art. 6, f.23).

3 d. Richard Beauchamp, earl of Warwick, carrying the young king Henry VI on his arm, Rous Roll (BL Add. MS 48976, f. 957).
4 a. Annunciation to the Shepherds with marginal decoration of a group of musicians and dancers, Hours of Jeanne de Navarre, c. 1329-36 (Paris, BN MS nouv. acq. lat. 3145, f. 53).

4 b. Children at play or mummers at work? Marginal scene in a northern-French psalter of the late thirteenth century (Oxford, Bodleian MS Douce 118, f. 34).
a. Romanesque Virgin and Child of the *sedes sapientiae* type, walnut with silver gilt, second half of the twelfth century (Orcival, Puy-de-Dôme).


c. Foetus positions in the womb: Moschion (Muscio), *De aegriudinibus mulierum*, c. 900 (Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale Albert 1er, MS 3701-15, f. 28).


6 b. Hans Holbein II: portrait of Edward VI as an infant, c. 1538 (Andrew W Mellon Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington).
7. Master of Moulins (Jean Hey?): portrait of the dauphin Charles Orland, son of Charles VIII of France and Anne of Brittany, at the age of 26 months, 1494 (Louvre).

8 b. Children(?) watching a puppet-show, marginal decoration in *Li romans du boin roi Alixandre*, Bruges, c. 1340 (Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodley 264, f. 54v).

8 c. Children(?) watching a puppet-show, marginal decoration in Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum Doctrinale*, thirteenth century (Bruges, Stadsbibliotheek MS St. 251, f. 191).
The miraculous recovery from drowning of three-year-old Marote who had tried to fill her toy jug with water from the river, in a late fifteenth-century manuscript of the *Vie et miracles de saint Louis* (BN, ms. fr. 2829, f. 98v).
11 a. Column statue of St Nicholas as an infant refusing to suck, c. 1180, from the cloisters of Notre-Dame-en-Vaux, Châlons-sur-Marne.

12 a. Infant being exposed, decorated initial for 'Expositio' in the fourteenth-century encyclopaedia *Omne bonum* (British Library, MS Royal 6E VII, f. 104).

12 b. Two child weepers on the brass of Robert Heyward (d. 1509) at Teynham, Kent.

12 c. Miracle of St Benedict bringing to life a farmer's dead son, c. 1140, capital in the church of Ste Madeleine, Vézelay.

12 d. Miracle of St Benedict bringing to life a farmer's dead son, Ramsey Psalter, c. 1300-10 (Pierpont Morgan, MS M 302, f. 5).
15 a. Lot, Abraham, Sarah and their families, Egerton Genesis, c. 1350-75 (BL MS Egerton 1894, f. 8).

15 b. Woodcut of 'Symon das selig kindlein zu Trient' being killed by the Jews, Schedelsche Weltchronik (Nuremberg Chronicle), first published by Hartmann Schedel in 1493.

16 b-c. Tomb effigy of Jean le Posthume (d. 1316), son of Louis X of France, at Saint-Denis.
a. Jean Pépin de Huy: tomb effigy of Jean de Bourgogne, son of Mahaut d'Artois, c. 1315, originally at the Jacobin convent at Poligny, Jura (now Musée des Beaux-Arts, Besançon).

b. Effigies of Blanche of the Tower (d. 1342) and William of Windsor (d. 1348), infant children of Edward III, on their joint tomb at Westminster Abbey, London.

c. Tomb of William of Hatfield (d. 1337), infant son of Edward III, at York Minster.
18 a. Limoges tomb effigy of Jean (d. 1248), infant son of Louis IX of France, originally at the abbey of Royaumont (now at Saint-Denis).

18 b. Limoges tomb effigy of Blanche (d. 1243), infant daughter of Louis IX of France, originally at the abbey of Royaumont (now at Saint-Denis).
19 a. Tomb with painted niche of Jean (d. 1248), infant son of Louis IX of France, originally at Royaumont but since destroyed (Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Gough-Drawings Gaignières 2, f. 26).

19 b. Tomb with painted niche of Blanche (d. 1243), infant daughter of Louis IX of France, originally at Royaumont but since destroyed (Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Gough-Drawings Gaignières 2, f. 29).
20 a. Six Ages of Man, detail from a typological window at Canterbury Cathedral, north choir aisle, late twelfth century.

20 b. Seven Ages of Man, woodcut from an edition of Bartholomaeus Anglicus' *De proprietatibus rerum*, printed in 1482.
21 a. Seven Ages of Man and death, from a French translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus' *De proprietatibus rerum* (Minneapolis, James Ford Bell Library, 1400/f Ba) early fifteenth century.

a. Single illuminated leaf showing five Ages of Man, with definitions based largely on Bartholomaeus Anglicus, mid fourteenth century (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, clm. 19414, f. 180).

b. Three Ages represented by children playing, in the initial E for Etas in the fourteenth-century encyclopaedia Omne bonum (BL MS Royal 6 E VII, f. 67v).
23 a. Four Ages of Man, in Aldobrandinus of Siena's *Le régime du corps*, c. 1300 (BL MS Sloane 2435, f. 31).

26. Seven Ages of Man, fourteenth-century mural on the north wall of Longthorpe Tower, near Peterborough, including a Nativity scene just above the recess.
27 a-b. Details of the mural of the Seven Ages at Longthorpe Tower.
28 a. Tree of Life, showing six of the twelve Ages, including nascens, infans, puer, infirmus, moriens and mortuus, from Ulrich von Lilienfeld's Concordantia caritatis, second half of the fourteenth century (Lilienfeld, Stiftsbibliothek cod. 151, f. 257v).

28 b. Wheel of Life, or Rota vitae alias fortunae, with seven Ages, in a German didactic miscellany, first quarter of the fifteenth century (London, Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, MS 49, f. 30v).
29. Wheel of Life, or *Rota vitae alias fortunae*, with seven Ages, in a German fortune-telling manuscript, third quarter of the fifteenth century (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, cgm. 312, f. 98).
30. Wheel of Life, or *Rota vitæ alias fortunae*, with seven Ages, woodcut of c. 1460, Middle-Rhine area (BL IC. 35).
32 a. Conception, illuminated initial at the beginning of book IX in a French manuscript of Aristotle’s *De animalibus*, thirteenth century (Oxford, Merton College MS 271).

32 b. Annunciation of the Virgin with descending Christ child, stained-glass panel, fifteenth century, St Peter Mancroft church, Norwich.

33 b. Diagram of the womb with seven (numbered) compartments, from Magnus Hundt's *Anthropologium*, printed in Leipzig in 1501.

33 c. Christ granting a long-awaited son and heir (the future Philip Augustus) to king Louis VII of France and his third wife Adèle de Champagne, from an illuminated manuscript of the *Grandes chroniques de France*, c. 1274 (Paris, Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève MS 782, f. 208).
34 a. Brass of Anne Astley, née à Wode (d. 1512), in her laced dress, holding her new-born swaddled twins, at Blickling, Norfolk.

34 b. Visitation scene showing the unborn Christ and St John in the wombs of Mary and Elizabeth, initial D on f. 176v of a Cistercian gradual, first half of the fourteenth century (Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek codex LIH1).
35 a. St Anne bathing the infant Mary, medallion in a window of the Life of the Virgin, c. 1330, north choir of the Frauenkirche, Esslingen.

36. The miracle of the little boy who tried to share his food with an image of the Christ child, from Jean Mielot’s collection of Miracles de la Glorieuse Vierge Marie, mid fifteenth century (Paris, BN ms. fr. 9199, f. 29).
37. Tapestry with naked *infantes* playing, French, early sixteenth century (Paris, Musée des Arts Décoratifs).
38 a. Semi-naked *infantes* with hobby-horses and windmill in a German tapestry representing the month of July, c. 1400-25 (Glasgow, Burrell Collection).

38 b. Naked *infans* with a lance riding a hobby-horse, marginal decoration in a French *danse macabre* manuscript, Paris, c. 1500-1510 (Paris, BN ms. fr. 995, f. 7).

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b. Naked *infans* with a huge windmill chasing a fly, marginal decoration in the Hours of Mary of Burgundy (Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Codex Vindobonensis 1857, f. 157).
41 a. Naked Christ child between the birds and foliage decoration in the margin of a missal produced in Maintz, 1481-82 (Berlin, Kupferstichkabinett MS 78 b.4, f. 14).

41 b. *Infantia Christi*, medallion in a window of the Life of the Virgin, c. 1330, north choir of the Frauenkirche, Esslingen; compare also plate 28 a.

41 c. *Infantia Christi* on the seal of the Dominicans of Nuremberg, before 1295.
42 a. Dormition of the Virgin, Winchester Psalter, c. 1150-60 (BL MS Nero CIV, f. 29).

42 b. Christ receiving the Virgin's soul, medallion from the Dormition window, c. 1200-15, south aisle of Chartres Cathedral.
43 a. Miniature tomb (37 x 47 cm) of Canon Aymeric, buried in Toulouse Cathedral in 1282 (now Musée des Augustins).

43 b. Caesarean birth of the Antichrist, woodcut, from Das Buch der Selenwurzgarten, printed by Matheis Hupffuff in Strasbourg, 1511.
44. The Fall, Expulsion from Paradise, and Eve spinning with her naked sons Abel and Cain by her side, in a German illuminated manuscript of the *Speculum humanae salvationis*, c. 1325-30 (Benediktinerstift Kremsmünster, Codex Cremianensis 243, f. 7v-8).
45 a. Baptism, stained-glass panel in a series of the Seven Sacraments of the Church, c. 1500-20, from 18 Highcross Street, Leicester.

45 b. The Dreamer and his lost 'Pearl', now one of the heavenly brides of Christ, in the illuminated manuscript copy, c. 1400 (BL Cotton MS Nero A. X, f. 42).

46 b. Last Judgement, second quarter of the thirteenth century, from the Trinity College Apocalypse (Cambridge, MS R.16.2, f. 25).
47 a. Naked infants playing, drypoint by the Hausbuch Master, active in the Upper-Rhine area, c. 1475-1500 (The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek).

47 b. Swaddled infant in initial E for 'Expositus', in the fourteenth-century encyclopaedia *Omne bonum* (British Library, MS Royal 6E VII, f. 104v).

47 c. Schematic reconstruction drawing of medieval swaddling method (by R Kitabgi).
48. Slovenian grandmother demonstrating the traditional swaddling technique.
49 a. Incised tomb slab of Jean-Saladin d'Anglure of Givry (d. 3 October 1530, aged three months) at Nangis; Gaignières drawing (Paris, BN Est. Rés. Pe 6, f. 32).

49 b. Tomb slab of an unknown lady and her swaddled infant, early fourteenth century, at Welby, Lincolnshire.

50 b. Jésueau or Christmas cradle, Flemish, early sixteenth century, oak with traces of polychromy, 23.1 x 23.6 x 12 cm (Goldschmidt collection).

50 c. Christ child statuette, Brussels/Malines, c. 1510, h. 53 cm (Museum voor Religieuze Kunst, Uden).

50 d. Christ child statuette, Malines, c. 1520, approx. 35 cm high (private collection).
Nativity with Joseph turning his hose into swaddling clothes, panel from a quadriptych by an unknown Netherlandish artist (Jean Malouel?), c. 1390-1410 (Antwerp, Museum Mayer van den Bergh).
52 a. The great relics of Aix, including the Virgin's shift, with Joseph's hose at the bottom, detail from a woodcut with relics from Maastricht, Aix and Cornelimünster, 1468 (1475?) (Munich, Staatliche Graphische Sammlung).

52 b. Joseph's hose displayed by two angels, woodcut of c. 1517.

52 c. Medieval pilgrim's badge showing Joseph's hose and other relics, lead, diameter 3.4 cm (Aix, Stadtgeschichtliches Museum).

53 b. Women rescuing their children and family possessions from the great 1286 fire in Berne, from Diebold Schilling's Spiezer Bilder-Chronik, 1485 (Berne, Städtliche und Universitätsbibliothek): note the woman in the center with a cradle on her shoulder.
54 a. Jugglers travelling with their belongings, woodcut, coloured broadsheet by an anonymous artist, c. 1450 (Brunswick, Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum).

54 b. Remains of a wooden rocking cradle: head end with curved beam and handle, twelfth century (Schleswig, Archäologisches Landesmuseum).
a. Birth of the Virgin, late fifteenth-century engraving by Israel van Mechenem.

b. Nativity of Christ, c. 1220-30, sculpted panel from the former choirscreen or jubé at Chartres Cathedral.
56 a. Substitution of the dead child, sculpted scene on a double capital with Solomon's Judgement on the other side, marble, third quarter of the twelfth century, originally from the destroyed cloisters of the abbey of St Ruf, Valence (now in Louvre collection).

56 b. Solomon's Judgement, with a baby in a cradle as a marginal decoration, in the Hours of Catherine of Cleves, c. 1440 (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library).
57 a. Silver-gilt jésseau with original Christ child figure, Liège, early fifteenth century, approx. 12 x 12 x 8 cm (Namur, Musée des Arts Anciens).

57 b. Christ child statuette belonging to the German nun Margareta Ebner, Vienna, 1344(?), h. 28 cm (Maria-Medingen Dominican nunnery).

57 c. Painted wooden jésseau decorated with angels, Vienna, c. 1340, l. 27 cm (Munich, Bayerisches Nationalmuseum).
58 a. Sibylla Samia with a rocking cradle as her attribute, in the Oracula Sibyllina printed c. 1468-70 (St Gallen Stiftsbibliothek).

58 c. Sibylla Samia, c. 1515, detail of the linteled of the sculpted retable in the Charvot chapel, Autun Cathedral.

59 a. Naked infant behind a baby-walker, Flemish, 1470s, marginal decoration in the Hours of Mary of Burgundy (Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Codex Vindobonensis 1857, f. 141).

59 b. Virgin Mary learning to walk behind a baby-walker, late fourteenth century, detail of an English embroidered orphrey (Glasgow, Burrell Collection).
60 a. Holy Family at work with the infant Christ in a baby-walker, Netherlandish, c. 1440, Hours of Catherine of Cleves (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library).

60 b. Naked Christ(?) child with a windmill and baby-walker, panel painting by Hieronymus Bosch with Christ carrying the cross on the other side, probably once part of a small triptych (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum).
61 a. Naked infant behind a baby-walker, c. 1450, limestone corbel from the St Janskathedraal, Bois-le-Duc (Brabant).

61 b. A woman encouraging a child to walk behind a baby-walker, 1491, woodcut from Heinrich Laufenberg's *Regimen sanitatis* (printed in Augsburg by Erhard Ratdolt).

61 c. A group of clerics and a group of women pointing to an infant in a cradle, decoration of the initial for 'Clericus coniugatus' in the fourteenth-century encyclopaedia *Omne bonum* (British Library, MS Royal 6E VII, f. 296v).
Reliquary casket showing the Massacre of the Innocents, c. 1210-20, Limoges enamel, 16 cm h. x 11.8 cm w. (Lucerne, Kofler-Truniger Collection).
63 a. Mould showing a Massacre scene, c. 1245-57, stone, 15.3 x 14 x 4 cm (Norwich, St Peter Hungate Museum).

63 b. Massacre scene on the left half of an ivory comb; English, twelfth century (London, Victoria and Albert Museum).
64 a. Massacre scene on a panel from an ivory diptych, early fifth century (Berlin, Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Staatliche Museen).


64 c. Massacre scene in the Augsburger Purpureevangelier (Munich, Staatsbibliothek clm. 23632, f. 24v).
65 a. Sibylla Europaea with a sword as her attribute, in the Oracula Sibyllina printed c. 1468-70 (St Gallen Stifts-bibliothek).

65 b. Flight into Egypt and Massacre of the Innocents in the Winchester Psalter, c. 1150 (BL MS Cotton Nero CIV, f. 14).
66a-b. Two marginal scenes showing Herod giving his order and the Massacre, Queen Mary Psalter, c. 1310-20 (BL MS Royal 2 B VII, f. 235v and 236).

66 c. Massacre decorating an initial in a French breviary, Paris, late fourteenth or early fifteenth century (BN ms. lat. 1024, f. 29).
67 a. Massacre scene, c. 1225-30, quatrefoil relief on the socle of the left jamb flanking the south portal, west front of Amiens Cathedral.

67 b. Massacre of the Innocents, miniature in the fifteenth century Codex Rotundus (Hildesheim, Diözesanmuseum).

69 a. Massacre scene with a Rachel-like mother seated in the centre, c. 1049, sculpted wooden panel from the double church door of St Maria im Kapitol, Cologne.

69 b. Massacre scene (on right) on the twelfth-century church font at Ingleton (Yorkshire), drawing after an 1844 engraving.

69 c. Herod displaying his anger on a boss in the north transept vault at Norwich Cathedral, early sixteenth century.

69 d. Massacre scene on a sculpted boss in the north transept vault at Norwich Cathedral.
70 a. The Innocents being received into Heaven by angels, boss in the north transept vault at Norwich Cathedral, early sixteenth century.

70 b. View of the nave vault of Norwich Cathedral, second half of the fifteenth century, with three bosses showing Herod with his soldiers (centre) and two Massacre scenes.
71 a. Massacre of the Innocents, c. 1200, stained-glass medallion in a window in the apse of Lyons Cathedral: note the devil whispering into Herod's ear.

71 b. Massacre, c. 1350, panel in the stained-glass cycle of the life of the Virgin at Regensburg Cathedral.

71 c. Massacre of the Innocents with a prostrate mourning mother, c. 1145-50, on the embrasures on the west portal ('Portail Royal') at Chartres Cathedral.
72 a. Massacre of the Innocents, c. 1200, wall-painting in the church of Saint-Martin at Aime (Savoie).

72 b. Massacre, c. 1120-30, illumination in the St Albans Psalter (Hildesheim, Basilika St Godehard).
73 a. Massacre of the Innocents, with a kneeling mother grasping a soldier's sword with her bare left hand, c. 1245-50, in the lower register of the tympanum of the north transept portal at Notre-Dame, Paris.

74 a. Massacre scene with a mother attacking a soldier from behind, manuscript illumination, Provence(?), c. 1265(?) (London, Warburg Institute, photographic collection).

74 b. Massacre scene with a mother fighting a soldier, wall-painting of c. 1300 in the choir of the church at Marchésieux (Manche).
Massacre of the Innocents in the Queen Mary Psalter, with a mother on the left attacking a soldier, c. 1310-20 (BL MS Royal 2 B VII, f. 132); note also the marginal decoration.
76 a. Massacre scene with a mother in the centre grabbing a soldier’s face, De Lisle Psalter, c. 1310 (BL MS Arundel 83, pt II, f. 124v).

76 b. Flight into Egypt miniature, with the Massacre in the background, in a Norman-French book of hours from around the second quarter of the fifteenth century (Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Auct. D. infra 2.11): just visible is a mother with a distaff fighting two soldiers.
77 a. Massacre scene in the margins of a Dutch book of hours, fifteenth century (Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 93, f. 34v): note the huge clubs wielded by two of the mothers and Herod approaching the scene on horseback.


78 b. Massacre of the Innocents, from a set of tapestries depicting the life of the Virgin, commissioned in 1474 (but not completed until 1500) by Jean Rolin for the church of Notre-Dame, Beaune.
79 a. Massacre of the Innocents, panel painting by an unknown artist, Freising (Bavaria), c. 1480 (Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum).

79 b. Detail.
80 a. Massacre of the Innocents, panel painting by an unknown artist, Antwerp, c. 1515 (Hannover, Landesgalerie).

80 b. Massacre scene, tracing after a drawing of an early fourteenth-century mural (now lost) at Headington (Oxfordshire).
Massacre of the Innocents, early fourteenth-century wall-painting on the south wall of the nave at All Saint's church, Croughton (Northamptonshire).
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Massacre of the Innocents, early fourteenth-century wall-painting on the south wall of the chancel at St Mary's church, Chalgrove (Oxfordshire).
83. Massacre of the Innocents, c. 1430, stained-glass panel in the east window at St Peter Mancroft church, Norwich.
84 a. Massacre of the Innocents, c. 1350, stained-glass window in the south clerestory of the choir at York Minster.

84 b. Herod stabbing an Innocent with his sword, one of the late-medieval windows (right) depicting the persecutors of the Church, St Mary the Virgin church, Fairford (Gloucestershire).
85. Flight into Egypt, with a Massacre scene below, c. 1430, Hours of Marguerite d'Orléans (Paris, BN ms. latin 1156 B, f. 102).
Massacre scene in Hours of Louis d'Orléans, c. 1490 (St Petersburg, Saltykov-Shchedrin Library MS Lat. O. V. I. N. 126, f. 36).
87. Massacre scene in the initial D in the Hours of Mary of Burgundy, Flemish, 1470s (Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Codex Vindobonensis 1857, f. 105).
Massacre of the Innocents, with Christ teaching the Doctors below, c. 1410-20, German picture bible produced in the Strasbourg area (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library M. 719-720, f. IVv).
89. Pharaoh's order to drown the male children of Israel compared to Herod ordering the Massacre; the birth of Moses compared to the Nativity of Christ; and Moses being exposed in his basket of reeds, c. 1215-30, *Bible moralisée* (Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Codex Vindobonensis 2554, f. 16).
90 a. Moses in the bulrushes, later fifteenth-century boss in the nave vault of Norwich Cathedral.


90 c. Solomon's Judgement and the return of the child to the mother, c. 1170-80, stained-glass medallion from a window in Strasbourg Cathedral.
91. The Massacre compared to Saul having Ahimelech and the priests killed (1 Samuel 22:11-18) and queen Athaliah ordering the killing of the princes (2 Kings 11:1), c. 1460, blockbook edition of the Biblia pauperum.
Massacre miniature, with queen Athaliah ordering the killing of the princes in an initial C on the facing page, c. 1440, book of hours by the Burgundian Master of Guillebert de Metz (Vatican, MS Ottobonianus latinus 2919, f. 135v-136).
93. The Last Judgement compared to the Judgement of Solomon and king David condemning the Amalekite, c. 1460, blockbook edition of the *Biblia pauperum*. 

94 b. Carved stone lid of the sarcophagus of the Infanta Blanca de Nájera (d. 1156): back.

94 c. Massacre of the Innocents: detail of the back of the sarcophagus lid.

95 b. Massacre of the Innocents, illustrating a description of the 1572 massacre of St Bartholomew in Paris, on p. 746 of the Sechssische Chronica printed in 1588.
96. Massacre of the Innocents, c. 1320-30, in an illuminated manuscript of the apocryphal Infancy of Christ (Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Selden Supra 38, I, f. 4).
98. Massacre of the Innocents, with Christ's entry into Jerusalem below, leaf from a twelfth-century picture bible from the Rhine or Meuse region (Frankfurt am Main, Hirsch collection).
99 a. Tomb slabs at Barbeau Abbey of Jean and Thibaut de Sancerre, twin brothers who drowned c. 1236 while swimming in the river; Gaignières drawings (Paris, BN Pe 11a, f. 126; Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Gough-Drawings Gaignières).

100 a. Baptism with Death as godfather, illumination from a manuscript copy of c. 1400 of Hugo von Trimberg's didactic poem Der Renner (c. 1300) (Leiden Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS Vossius G.G.F. 4, f. 247v).
101 a. Death and the infant, woodcut from a German blockbook edition of the Totentanz printed at Heidelberg in 1465 (Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek, Codex pal. germ. 438).

101 b. Death and the infant, followed by Death and the mother, antiquarian watercolour (detail) made by Emanuel Büchel in 1768 of the since lost 'Kleinbasel' Dance of Death mural of c. 1460-80 at the Dominican nunnery in Klingenthal, Basel (Kunstmuseum Basel, Kupferstickkabinett).
102 a. Dance of Death fresco, probably c. 1500-10, originally situated on the walls of the charnel-house at Metnitz (Carinthia).

102 b. Detail of the Metnitz fresco, with the infant and the mother on the far right.

102 c. Dance of Death (detail) showing Death taking the infant from his cradle on the far left, 1490, wall-painting by Johannes von Kastav at St Trojstva church, Hrastovlje (Istria).
103 a. Death and the infant, woodblock, from a Totentanz printed by Heinrich Knoblochtzer in c. 1485 at either Strasbourg or Heidelberg.

103 b. Death snatching the infant from his rocking cradle, in a Totentanz manuscript of c. 1470 (Kassel, Landesbibliothek Ms. poet. et roman. 5).

104 b. Death and the infant in his cradle, c. 1490, detail from the mural in the parish church at Meslay-le-Grenet (near Chartres).
106. Death and the infant, detail of the large version of the Paris danse macabre by Antoine Vérand, 1490 (Paris, BN, Cabinet des Estampes, Te. 8 rés. C21297-21301).
107 a. The *infans* between a mature adult and an old man, in one of the sculpted Dance of Death friezes of c. 1534-37 at Dresden, Georgenschloß.

107 b. Death and the swaddled infant (right), c. 1465-70(?), on the north wall of the choir in the abbey church of St Robert, La Chaise-Dieu (Haute Loire).

108 b. The mother with her swaddled infant in Death's dance, c. 1480, Totentanz in a compilation manuscript by the Augsburg humanist Sigismund Gossembrot (Munich, Staatsbibliothek clm. 3941).
109 a. Death and the mother in the Großbasel 'Death of Basel' in the Predigerkloster, probably painted shortly after the 1439 plague, since destroyed, here preserved in a copper engraving published by Matthäus Merian in 1621.

109 b. Detail of a 1773 watercolour copy of the Großbasel 'Death of Basel', showing Death and the mother.
110. Death and the Fool, followed by Death and the mother with her infant, wall-painting on the churchyard wall of the Dominican convent in Berne, originally painted between 1516 and 1520 by Niklaus Manuel, here preserved through a gouache copy of 1649.
111. Mother and child in a Totentanz painted on canvas by Jakob von Wyl for the Jesuit college at Lucerne around 1615.
112. Death and 'la jeune fille' in an illuminated manuscript of the *Danse macabre des femmes*, attributed to the anonymous Master of Philippe of Guelders (active c. 1495-1510) (Paris, BN ms. fr. 995, f. 38v).
113. Death and 'la femme veufve' in an illuminated manuscript of the *Danse macabre des femmes* (BN ms. fr. 995, f. 29v).

115. Death and the wetnurse in an illuminated manuscript of the *Danse macabre des femmes* (BN ms. fr. 995, f. 34v).
116. Tomb monument commissioned on 29 March 1462 by René d'Anjou from the sculptor Pons Poncet for his wetnurse Tiphaine la Magine (d. 1458) at the church of Nantilly, Saumur (Gaignières drawing, BN Cabinet des Estampes Rés. Pe. I, f. 8).
117. Death and 'la femme grosse' in an illuminated manuscript of the *Danse macabre des femmes* (BN ms. fr. 995, f. 32v).
118 a. Death striking a swaddled infant with his arrow, 1557, incised tomb slab of Ghislaenike van de Kerove at Nieuwkapelle (Belgium).

118 b. Three danse macabre scenes, including Death and the infant, marginal decorations in a book of hours printed by Simon Vostre in c. 1512.

118 c. Allegory of Victory, added to the 1549 and 1562 editions of Holbein's Totentanz.
120 a. Design for a silver dagger sheath decorated with six danse macabre pairs, including the infant, 1839 engraving after the original drawing in the Basel Museum.

120 b. Totentanz alphabet with Y for ymfans, 1520s, by Hans Holbein the Younger.

120 c. Death and the infant, from Hans Holbein’s Großer Totentanz, published in 1538 as Les simulachres & historiees face de la mort.

Homo natus de muliere, breui viuens tempore repletur multis miseriis, qui quasi flos egredititur, & conteritur, & fugit velut umbra.

Tout homme de la femme yffant Remply de misere, & d’encombe, Ainsi que fleur tost finissant. Sort & puis fuyt comme fait l’ombre.
121 a. The infant and the old man in 'The Daunce and Song of Death', Elizabethan broadsheet.

121 b. Old age and the infant flanking Death, sculpted decoration on one of the late sixteenth-century Foljambe monuments in St Mary and All Saints' church at Chesterfield (Derbyshire).
122. The miracle of the dead infant being brought back to life after its mother persisted in praying to a statue of the Virgin, from Jean Mielot's collection of *Miracles de la Glorieuse Vierge Marie*, mid fifteenth century (Paris, BN ms. fr. 9199, f. 38v).
123. Enguerrand Quarton’s Coronation of the Virgin, commissioned by canon Jean de Montagnac on 23 April 1453.
124. The baptized children among the saints in Heaven: detail (right side) of Enguerrand Quarton’s Coronation of the Virgin (Musée de Villeneuve-lès-Avignon).
125 a. The baptized children among the saints in Heaven: detail (left side) of Enguerrand Quarton’s *Coronation of the Virgin* (Musée de Villeneuve-lès-Avignon).

125 b. The unbaptized children in Limbo: detail (bottom left corner) of Enguerrand Quarton’s *Coronation of the Virgin*.
126. Monument of Christian, Lady St John (d. 22 July 1653), and her newborn son John Paulet, in Staveley parish church (Derbyshire), with detail of the putto with a skull on the left.