# Chapter 4: The Literary Tradition

## Erotic Insinuations, Irony, and Ekphrasis

Even before the story of Pero and Cimon became a well-known subject matter in early modern art, European audiences were familiar with it through a millenarian textual tradition and an oral tradition that left traces in Spain, Italy, Greece, Germany, Pomerania, Albania, and Serbia until the nineteenth century.[1] The primary ancient source was Valerius Maximus's *Memorable Doings and Sayings* (ca. 31 CE), of which at least fifty-one different editions were printed in Italy, Germany, Spain, and France before 1500.[2] In the Middle Ages, Maximus's book ranked as the most frequently copied manuscript next to the Bible.[3] In addition, numerous retellings of Maximus's example of filial piety found their way into medieval fiction, moral treatises, sermon literature, and compilations of "women's worthies." The story about the breastfeeding daughter as an allegory of filial piety in both its maternal and paternal variety was thus widely known to both learned and illiterate audiences in medieval and early modern Europe.

The fame of Valerius Maximus's *Memorable Doings and Sayings* in medieval and early modern Europe stands in stark contrast to its neglect in the scholarly world since the nineteenth century. Only recently have literary historians rediscovered and translated his text, commenting on how the derivative nature of Maximus's anecdotes relegated them to near total obscurity in the modern academic world.[4] His compilation of historical and moral exempla acquired best-seller status already in antiquity because of the brief and succinct form in which he presented those memorable stories about the past, which he collected from a wide array of Latin and Greek authors, as well as their somewhat sensationalist content. His anecdotes illustrate upper-class Romans' political, military, and religious duties as well as the patriarchal values that, he seems to suggest, should inform contemporaries' family lives and private culture.

As I will argue in the following, Maximus's anecdotes are deeply unsettling because of the laconic – or stoic – manner with which violent or otherwise disturbing content matter is presented. Despite their overtly didactic purpose,

they thrive on a rhetoric of detachment and emotional ambiguity that serves to undermine the patriarchal message they allegedly pronounce. The two breastfeeding episodes, in particular, contain deviant erotic allusions that threaten to subvert the maxim of filial piety they were supposed to illustrate. In the medieval tradition, the daughter's love for her mother is treated as a perfect example of reciprocity in kinship relations, but such mutual regard is conspicuously missing in the original version and later retellings of the father-daughter example. The ekphrastic structure of the story of Pero and Cimon lends a certain shock value to this anecdote, which in its stress on pictorial, i.e., non-verbal, truth invites the reader's voyeuristic insinuations.

Maximus's anecdotes express the sternness and gravitas of first-century imperial discourse but also a certain ambiguity vis-à-vis the prohibitive nature of family relations that celebrated the unlimited power of the pater familias. The sense of ironic detachment unfolds gradually as his anecdotes move from illustrations of military virtue and obedience to the gods to contemporary Roman customs and stories about private life and gender relations. In book II of his *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, for example, Maximus treats the reader to several stories about fathers who had their sons executed for infringement of their military orders. Among others, he mentions the dictator Postumius, who, "because … [his son] went forth from his post and routed the enemy of his own motion and not by … [his] bidding … ordered the victor to be beheaded," and "Torquatus, Consul in the Latin war, [who] ordered … [his] son to be seized by a lector and slaughtered like a sacrificial victim as he was bringing back a glorious victory and splendid spoils, because … he had gone out to combat without … [his] knowledge."[5] Fond of crass opposites, even paradoxical situations, Maximus leaves the didactic purpose of these anecdotes in doubt. Summarizing the moral value of the story about Postumius, he suggests that this general must have suffered from depression when seeing his son exhibit the military talents he himself taught him. And directly addressing Torquatus – who turned his son into a sacrificial victim – as if in a court of law, he states laconically: "you judged it better that a father should lose a brave son than that the fatherland should lose military discipline."[6]

An even greater gulf between explicit message and erosive commentary is expressed in Maximus's anecdote about the wife of Drusus Germanicus in his chapter on "abstinence and continence." Mentioning that Drusus "kept his sexual activity confined within his love for his wife" and that Antonia, his wife, "balanced her husband's love with outstanding loyalty," he concludes with a somewhat strange description of Antonia's bedroom habits after she was widowed: "After his death, in the flower of her age and beauty, she slept with her mother-in-law in lieu of a husband. In the same bed the vigour of youth was quenched for the one and the experience of widowhood turned to old age for the other. Let this bedroom set the finishing touch on such examples."[7]

Evoking the image of a widow who invites her mother-in-law into her marital bed as the ultimate example of chastity must have surprised his readers, even provoked laughter. Here it is important to keep in mind that story collections such as Maximus's were read aloud at banquets as entertainment, a context that makes an entirely serious consumption of their moral exempla unlikely.[8] In his chapter on "ancient institutions," a reference to the prohibition against women's dining in a reclining position declares openly that among his contemporaries, this "form of austerity" and exhibition of female discipline had long been given up.[9]

The anecdotes that concern us directly, about the unnamed Roman daughter who breastfed her mother and Pero who breastfed her father, celebrate a spectacular, and ironic, reversal of values. They are tucked in between other examples of "piety towards parents and brothers and country," most of which express sons' duties toward their fathers. Their expressions of piety range from saving their fathers' lives in battle and dying to avenge their fathers' death to the stoic endurance of humiliation inflicted on them by their fathers. These latter anecdotes resonate most with the stories about paternal cruelty mentioned above: in Book V. 4. 3, Manlius forces the tribune to refrain from suing his father, despite the fact that he had prevented him from proving his manhood and seeking glory in war. In Book V. 4. 5, Flaminius, tribune of the plebs, retracts a law proposal when his father "placed a hand on him as he was already on the rostra putting the law to vote, overborne by private authority."[10] And in Book V. 4. ext. 2, Cimon (different Cimon) enters prison in his father's stead, an act that "gained [him] more glory in prison than in the senate house."[11] Two anecdotes recount stories about sons expressing reverence vis-à-vis their mothers at the cost of military defeat and death.[12]

Although favoring sons' expressions of filial piety and patriotism, three out of fourteen of Maximus's anecdotes involve daughters, arranged at the very center of this chapter. In Book V. 4. 6, the author tells the story of Claudia, the vestal who rescues her father from the mob that wants to kill him during his triumphant entry into Rome.[13] The two interlocking lactation scenes immediately follow suit, proposing a more humble model of female heroism. In line with his preference for juxtapositions, reversals, and paradoxes, Maximus structures the two breastfeeding anecdotes as alternate versions of each other. If the mother-daughter story is taken from Roman history, the story about Pero and Cimon (here Myco) is an "external" example from Greece. If the former creates suspense through narrative means, the latter one is couched as ekphrasis, the actual or presumed description of a painting. And if, in terms of the stories' allusions to deviant sexualities, the example of the Roman daughter who breastfed her mother conjures up the specter of a female same-sex encounter, Pero's act of nursing her father projects the danger of first-order incest as yet another boundary transgression.

The unusual nature of the two anecdotes is highlighted by Maximus in his preface to Book V. 4. 7: he openly apologizes for their squalid setting in a prison. The preceding story, we recall, was about Claudia's triumphant, warrior-like intervention during her father's infelicitous entry into Rome. Maximus conceived of the two stories as occupying different ends on a spectrum, moving from a "most sacred temple to a place in the city more necessary than splendid" and having the daughter of a female convict follow the example of an upper-class vestal priestess.[14] Instead of a battle, the workings of the Roman judicial system are at the center of this anecdote, while the breastfeeding episode is told obliquely through the eyes of the prison guard. The jailer appears to be the true protagonist of the story, as he refrains from strangling the mother right away and presents the daughter's rescue effort as an example of filial piety with the judges, an intervention that saves the mother's life and rehabilitates her:

"A Praetor had handed over a woman of free birth found guilty at his tribunal of a capital crime to the Triumvir to be executed in prison. Received there, the head warder had pity on her and did not strangle her immediately. He even allowed her daughter to visit her, but only after she had been thoroughly searched to make sure she was not bringing in any food, in the expectation that the prisoner would die of starvation. But after a number of days had passed, he asked himself what could be sustaining her so long. Observing the daughter more closely, he noticed her putting out her breast and relieving her mother's hunger with the succor of her own milk. This novel and remarkable spectacle was reported by him to the Triumvir, by the Triumvir to the Praetor, by the Praetor to the board of judges; as a result the woman's sentence was remitted. Whither does Piety not penetrate, what does she not devise? In prison she found a new way to save a mother. For what so extraordinary, so unheard of, as for a mother to be nourished by her daughters' breasts? This might be thought to be against nature, if to love parents were not Nature's first law."[15]

The daughter's piety is represented as contagious, as it is her "novel and remarkable spectacle" that inspires various members of the Roman court system to suspend her mother's sentence and, in a utopian turn of events, exchange charity for justice. Despite the emphasis on judicial proceedings, the reader's curiosity remains strangely unsatisfied with respect to the nature of the mother's crime. The fact that Maximus leaves her transgression shrouded in silence leads some medieval authors to speculate about the mother's innocence. Furthermore, both the mother and the daughter remain unnamed, which is unusual in Maximus's collection of facts. Almost all other stories derive the effect of immediacy and vividness from clearly locating their protagonists in time and space. By contrast, this story features "Piety" as a personified concept rather than a young woman endowed with agency, motivation, and determination. The story ends with a reference to "Nature's" laws, which, in the eyes of the prison warder, the daughter does not violate in this strange exchange of

body fluids with another woman. Instead, she affirms it insofar as she observes the rule of reciprocity in kinship relations. Nonetheless, the guard's brief hesitation in recognizing the daughter's sacrifice as a pious deed instead of an "unnatural" same-sex encounter introduces a moment of doubt and renders the anecdote too equivocal to serve as a straightforward example of female virtue.

To some extent, this story is about rivalry between different concepts of justice. The anonymous daughter, an embodiment of "piety," neutralizes her mother's violation of civil laws through her adherence to nature's laws and gains the commutation of her mother's sentence. She accomplishes through bodily gestures what other women who insisted that their voices be heard at court and in the political arena only rarely achieved. In a chapter entitled "Women who Pleaded before Magistrates for Themselves or for Others," Maximus gives three examples of women who dared to speak up in front of praetors and triumvirs. While he praises Maesia of Sentinum, who took over her own defense in a public trial and won, and lauds Hortensia for achieving the repeal of a tax on matrons, he speaks with great contempt of Carfania, who "[plagued] the tribunals with barkings to which the Forum was unaccustomed … [and] became a notorious example of female litigiousness."[16]

The unnamed Roman daughter who breastfed her mother can thus be viewed as one of those "women and other voiceless things," whose evocation in public speeches functions rhetorically as allegory. According to Greek and Roman theorists of oratory, successful allegories conjure up vivid images in the minds of the audience and are meant to arouse empathy and "piety."[17] Although achieved through linguistic means, the effects of allegory are located in the extra-linguistic realm of the listener's imagination, producing those feelings of empathy the orator needs to arouse in order to be persuasive. In this sense, the pious – but also pitiful, because voiceless – daughter both narratively enacts and metaphorically symbolizes the process of allegorization as such. Her example establishes "piety" as a counter-concept to justice as the original allegorical trope. This tight correspondence of form and content, uniting the evocation of female bodily form with the arousal of pity and piety, would dominate the workings of allegorization through the Middle Ages and beyond (see Chapter 6).

The story of Pero and Cimon (alias Myco) amplifies the notion of filial piety as quintessential allegory while enhancing the moral ambiguities of the event. Told as ekphrasis, Maximus structures the meta-plot of this anecdote as a competition between linguistic and visual means of representation:

"Let the same be considered as predicated concerning the piety of Pero, whose father Myco (Cimon) was in a like sorry plight and equally under prison guard. A man in extreme old age, she put him like a baby to her breast and fed him. Men's eyes are riveted in amazement when they see the painting of this act and renew the features of the long bygone incident in astonishment at

the spectacle now before them, believing that in those silent outlines of limbs they see living and breathing bodies. This must needs happen to the mind also, admonished to remember things long past as though they were recent by painting, which is considerably more effective than literary memorials."[18]

Declaring that visual representations are more efficient in arousing those mental images which not only produce feelings of empathy but also aid in the operation of memory, Maximus elaborates in this story on his complex views regarding parental breastfeeding, piety, and allegory. Paradoxically denying the force of his own words, he recommends that Pero's and Cimon's lactation be painted rather than narrated for greater effect. The gender switch of the parent is, of course, momentous for the ekphrastic structure of the account. The sensationalist celebration of the daughter who "put … [her father] like a baby to her breast and fed him" stands in stark contrast to the hasty denial of any sexual implications of the mother-daughter scene. The eroticization of Pero's quenching of her father's thirst detracts quite explicitly from the "pious" motif of the scene; it rather underscores the lack of reciprocity between her father's needs and wants and Pero's heroic sacrifice in satisfying them. Whether Cimon gets rehabilitated and released from prison just like the Roman mother is left in doubt. Maximus provides closure in this anecdote through a meditation on different methods of recording historical events, rather than by affirming the impeccable moral qualities of the act thus witnessed. The commentary on processes of allegorization finds in Pero's story a fitting sequel to the anecdote of the breastfeeding Roman daughter: if the latter exhibits stress on parental breastfeeding as a symbol of piety and exemplifies the effects of arousing pity in a judicial setting by reference to "voiceless" women, the former recommends the eroticized depiction of such women's bodily gestures in the arts for the arousal of "riveting" emotions in the male viewer.

The two anecdotes thus make important comments about gendered figures of speech, the function of these rhetorical devices for the workings of imagination and memory, and the "reality-effect" of the eroticized and naturalized depiction of female bodies. Both anecdotes displace the mother by substituting her with an eroticized figure of the maternal, arousing phantasies of regression and the specter of incest. While the first anecdote represents a mirror-like reversal of the roles of mother and daughter and a clear causal relationship between the daughter's sacrifice and the mother's rehabilitation, the second one is more complicated because the law of reciprocity does not necessarily apply. In Maximus's anecdotes, patriarchy is presented as a hierarchical structure in which fathers execute the right over life and death of their children, mainly their sons. In this context, Pero's act assumes a heroic (and also tragic) character, because she undermines the workings of justice to rescue a father whose guilt is beyond the shadow of a doubt. She could let him die, but chooses not to. She assumes a position of power only to be – quite literally – consumed

by him, and it is her oscillation between victim and woman on top that renders this allegory of filial love subversive and at the same time constitutive of the patriarchal order that Maximus takes such great pains to describe.

The story of Pero and Cimon is presented as an "external" example derived from Greek sources. This orientalization serves as an effective strategy of detachment from a morally ambiguous story. It is followed by another prison story centering on Cimon, son of Miltiades, a famous Greek general who won the battle of Marathon, who "did not hesitate to buy burial for … [his] father with voluntary chains."[19] Cimon, who eventually became a famous general and senator in Athens, voluntarily entered prison after his father had fallen from grace and died, just so that his body could be buried honorably. In later adaptations of Pero's anecdote, her father's name Myco(n) gets switched with the name of Miltiades's son Cimon, which produces a certain conflation of topics and characters. The appropriation of Cimon's name for Pero's father – facilitated by the two names' reverse alliteration – suggests the wish to present the suckling old man as an innocent victim rather than a guilty old patriarch, probably in order to render Pero's sacrifice more intelligible. This was not Maximus's intention, however; he never questions Myco's guilt or mentions his rehabilitation. Only by mapping his story onto the preceding mother-daughter anecdote does the reader imagine a "happy end" to Pero's father's trials and tribulations.

The fluidity and selectivity in appropriating Maximus's anecdotes by subsequent ancient and medieval authors characterize the creative process Maximus himself underwent in adapting known stories for his collection. The only identifiable source for his example of Pero and her father is Hygin's brief entry about Xanthippe in his *Fables* (written some time before 17 CE), an encyclopedic collection of Greek mythological stories. This entry laconically states that "Xanthippe offered her breast milk to her father Mycon, who was locked up in prison, to keep him alive."[20] Hygin's brief index receives its full meaning in the context of fourteen other short entries held together under the chapter heading "Exceptionally Devoted Women and Men." The theme of female devotion is treated here in a somewhat counter-intuitive manner, since almost all eleven entries about "pious" daughters and sisters in Hygin's *Fables* tell of disastrous family relationships involving incest and murder. Among those pious women are "Antigone, daughter of Oedipus, [who] buried her brother Polynices;"[21] Electra and Iliona, who took care of their baby brothers Orestes and Polydorus, respectively; Pelopia who was raped by her father and gave birth to his son; Hypsipyle, who saved her father from the women of Lemnos; Chalciope, who "did not abandon her father after he lost his kingship;" Harpalyce, who was nursed by heifers and mares and who "saved her father in war and drove the enemy to flight;" Erigone, who "killed herself by hanging after her father died;" Agave, who killed her own son but conquered a kingdom for her father; and Tyro, who "killed her sons to save her father."[22]

Hygin understands women's piety as daughters' and sisters' voluntary submission to the (then) new order of patriarchy. This gets expressed quite clearly in his example of Hypsipyle, who, as we read elsewhere in Hygin's *Fables*, saved her father Thoas from the women of Lemnos, who "conspired and killed every last male on the island" after their husbands had left them for Thracian women.[23] Hypsipyle never reaps any benefits from her heroic act; she flees after being found out, gets picked up by pirates, and is sold into slavery to become the wet-nurse for the son of King Lycurgus.[24] Eventually, the women of Lemnos themselves surrender to the new law: all those who become pregnant by an Argonaut name their sons after their father.[25]

Other "pious" women in Hygin's *Fables* suffer death and rape for the benefit of their fathers and brothers. Harpalyce, daughter of Harpalycus, king of the Amyneans, renounces her right to rule after her father's death. Raised, motherless, by wild animals, and trained in warfare by her father, she saves him in battle but when he dies accidentally, she retreats into the woods, bereft of grief, and lets herself be killed by shepherds.[26] Erigone, too, loved her father so much that she committed suicide upon finding his body.[27] Tyro killed the sons she conceived by her uncle when she learned they were destined to murder her father.[28] Pelopia suffered rape at the hands of her father in order to give birth to a son who could avenge her father against his evil brother.[29] Finally Antigone, herself the daughter of an incestuous union, is killed by Creon after burying her brother and giving birth to Creon's grandson.[30] The remaining four stories involving sons are less violent, consisting of straightforward rescue missions of their parents, except perhaps the last one about Cleops and Bitias, sons of Cydippe, priestess of Juno, who died in "reward" for a service they rendered to their mother.[31] This last example is also taken up by Maximus.

Hygin's entry about Xanthippe is thus situated in the midst of stories about "pious" women's consent to patriarchy, a context that lends an important interpretive clue to the breastfeeding episode. The charitable nursing of Xanthippe's father is equated to women's self-destructive love for their fathers and brothers, leading to incest and murder. According to Hygin's *Fables*, piety can only be performed by women as an act of submission vis-à-vis their male kin. In Maximus's anecdotes, echoes of Hygin's ironic, and slightly perverse, understanding of female "piety" survive. The labeling of his chapter "Of Piety towards Parents and Brothers and Country" shows that Maximus read Hygin's examples carefully, echoing their patriotic bend. Maximus, writing mostly about Roman history and culture, lends greater emphasis to father-son relationships, but it is his two differently gendered breastfeeding episodes that would become synonymous with the very concept of filial piety until the Renaissance and beyond. While Hygin promotes a concept of filial devotion that includes infanticide, incest, and insanity, Maximus points to the moral ambiguities of patriarchy in a more subtle manner.

*Figure 4.1: Pero and Cimon, Pompeii, Casa IX, 2,5, before 79 CE*

In the first century CE, Myco/Cimon and Pero were depicted several times in the visual arts as well, either serving as a foil for Maximus's ekphrastic description, or retroactively illustrating the breastfeeding scene with the kind of emotional intensity that he imagined. In Pompeii alone, three different wall paintings (Figure 4.1), two identical terracotta sculptures of Egyptian manufacture, and a ceramic fragment have been excavated since the late eighteenth century; also extant is a fragment of an ancient south-Gallic relief of *Pero and Cimon* (Figure 4.2).[32] The popularity of the motif in the visual arts found its equivalent in ancient literary sources, where filial breastfeeding was, since the second century, conceived of as the very allegory of "piety." It is noteworthy that no ancient artistic depiction of the mother-daughter lactation remains and that nearly every author who wrote about filial piety after Maximus chose either the all-female or the cross-gendered version to illustrate his point, never both at the same time (with very few exceptions).

*Figure 4.2: Pero and Cimon, 1st c. CE, Sigillata Shard, Southern Gaul*

Pliny the Elder concentrates in his *Natural History* (77 CE) on the all-female version of the theme. In his chapter on "Instances of the Highest Degree of Affection," he tells of a lower-class woman who "was detected nourishing her mother with the milk of her breast." Not only was the mother pardoned "in consideration of the marvelous affection of the daughter;" both "were maintained for the rest of their days at the public charge." Under the consulship of C. Quintius and M. Acilius, i.e., in 192–91 BCE, a temple was built in their honor on the former spot of that prison, dedicated to the goddess of Piety, "where the theatre of Marcellus now stands."[33] Pliny was the first author to highlight the tremendous public impact of the daughter's charitable act through the construction of a temple in her honor. At other points in his encyclopedia, Pliny mentions the many medicinal powers of women's milk, and returns to the theme of maternal and filial lactation in a section on eye diseases: "It is asserted that one who has been rubbed with the milk of mother and daughter together never needs to fear eye trouble for the rest of his life."[34]

At the turn of the third century CE, Sextus Pompeius Festus remembers the lactation scene in his alphabetically organized dictionary *On the Significance of Words*. Although relying on Pliny, he changes the gender of the nursing parent. Under the entry "piety," he explains: "The Romans honor piety as they honor all other gods. One says that the temple of Piety was consecrated by Acilius in the very space where the woman lived who had secretly nourished her father … with the milk from her breasts: and in recompense for her devotion she obtained his release [from prison]."[35] Later on in the third century, Gaius Julius Solinus remembers the story in his *Collection of Memorable Events*, amplifying on Festus's entry and, likewise, switching the mother for the father.[36] Memories of the breastfeeding mother-daughter couple thus seem to fade after Pliny. In yet another retelling of the episode, Nonnos of Panopolis integrates a much embellished and dramatized version of the father-daughter scene into his novel *Dionysiaca* (5th century).[37]

After a hiatus of 600 years, the story reappears in a medieval Byzantine account.[38] This twelfth-century text records the influence of an oral tradition that can be traced all over Europe until the nineteenth century. Typical of the oral tradition in which the motif circulated is its presentation as a riddle about kinship and the assumption that the daughter breastfeeds her father through the bars of a prison window. This medieval story, moreover, is couched as a story about a king who is jealous of his older brother. The king, fearing that his brother conspires to deprive him of his kingship, has him arrested and orders that he die by starvation. The daughter of the king's brother knows that her father was imprisoned without cause and reason and achieves permission to visit him twice a day. The king orders that an opening be made in the prison walls through which the prisoner and his daughter can talk. The young woman resolves to offer her breasts to her father through the crack in the wall, thus keeping him alive. The king, seeing that his brother does not die, suspects his niece of sorcery and prohibits any further visits. The daughter, deep in thought about what she could do next, encounters a soldier on the road who is cutting open the womb of a pregnant mare to extract the foal. He explains to her that the foal will survive, and that he will make a saddle from the mother's coat. The daughter is immediately very happy to hear this, as she thinks of a ruse to save her father. She buys both the foal and the mare's coat from the soldier, has a blanket made from the coat, and sends both the young horse and the saddle to the king as gifts. In return, she asks to be able to visit her father again. One day, she sees the king riding the horse. She approaches him, and says: "You are riding on an animal that was never born and you are sleeping under his mother."[39] The king is much astonished at these words and begs her to clarify them. She answers: "I will explain them, my king, when you have given me my child … who will become my father when you return him to me, but stay my child if you don't."[40] The king, embarrassed at not understanding her riddle, grants her what she is asking for, provided she decodes

her enigmatic words. So she uncovers to the king the details of her ruse and demands that her father be freed.

Nineteenth-century folklorists have gathered many versions of this riddle about the father-who-is-also-the-son of his daughter. A Spanish version goes as follows: "One day I was daughter / now I am mother / The prince whom my breasts are nursing / Is the husband of my mother / Guess correctly, gentlemen."[41] In Venice, a similar riddle was recorded: "Guess … I am the daughter of a great lord / now I am daughter, tomorrow mother / I nurse a son, husband of my mother."[42] As in the Byzantine story, a version of which was recorded in nineteenth-century Lesbos, the father is here a prince or great lord.[43] In sixteenth-century Germany, the emphasis was placed on the daughter's "betrayal" of the judicial authorities: "Pulled through columns / lords betrayed / I will become the mother / Of whom I was the daughter / I raised my mother a beautiful husband."[44] The image of the daughter's nursing through a crack in the wall, or with the help of a tube, is repeated in stories collected in nineteenth-century Pomerania, Serbia, and Albania.[45] Archer Taylor mentions similar riddles from England, Sardinia, Sicily, Armenia, Denmark, and Lithuania.[46] In sixteenth-century Italy, oral culture found its way back into "high" literature with Latin versions of the riddle and, most importantly, Giovanni Straparola's novel *The Delightful Nights* (1550).[47] One of the stories in this collection, which happens to be about the incestuous sharing of a wife between two brothers, ends with our riddle: "I am a virgin / round and slim / I became mother and daughter of my father / and with the milk of my breast / I nourished a son, husband of my mother."[48]

Carla Freccero interprets the early modern frequency of riddles about incestuous kinship, of which additional evidence exists in the form of epitaphs on tombstones, as indicative of a profound uneasiness among contemporaries with all kinship based on arbitrary hierarchies and exclusions. Freccero argues that story no. 30 in Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptameron*, in which a widow who commits incest with her son and gives birth to a daughter who winds up marrying her father/brother, exhibits a "peculiar queerness" that allegorizes as "incestuous and endogamous [a] sixteenth-century monarchic strategy even as it aspires to a similarly parthenogenetic fantasy of maternal/matriarchal rule."[49] In her eyes, Marguerite de Navarre's implicit critique of patriarchal genealogies takes the form of a fantasy about matrilineal incest, thus revealing the peculiar exclusions of all forms of dynastic kinship. The riddles about Pero and Cimon enact a similar reversal of genealogical origins in emphasizing the daughter's fictive usurpation of her father's mother's place. They reduce the father to a passive plaything of his daughter, who, in taking on the role of her grandmother, "raises her mother a beautiful husband." The presentation of the father-daughter breastfeeding episode, as well as other incestuous encounters, in the form of a riddle has moreover the

effect of exposing all kinship as an arbitrary and non-obvious order based on gendered exclusions.[50]

The bewildering frequency with which the riddle was recorded in oral culture by nineteenth-century folklorists, and translated back into written culture in the sixteenth century, has left traces in the visual tradition as well. In those artistic representations, Pero nurses her father through a window or another opening in the prison wall, probably in order to highlight the boundary transgression that her incestuous milk sharing entailed, or else to prevent the nursing scene from degenerating into full-fledged intercourse. Robero Danese has pointed out how in Greek and Roman antiquity and medieval Islam, a powerful taboo against the mixing of sperm – i.e., blood – with milk led to chastity requirements for wet-nurses, and marriage prohibitions for milk siblings and all of their descendants, respectively.[51]

In certain tribal communities of Afghanistan, rituals of adult breastfeeding served until the nineteenth century as a punishment for and remedy against adultery, because the sharing of milk constituted kinship-like bonds of fosterage that rendered any further sexual intercourse unthinkable.[52] In the United States, remote and somewhat inconsistent echoes of this ancient ban found their way into Todd Akin's campaign for a senatorial post. On August 25, 2012, the Republican congressman explained on public radio that in his eyes, "female breast milk – when fed directly to an adult homosexual male daily for at least four weeks – has a 94% chance of permanently curing homosexual perversions." Lesbians, he added, would have to drink some other beverage to receive the same benefit.[53] Why Akin thought breastfeeding could cure male homosexuality in particular is unclear, but what resonates with our material is the deep-seated conviction that adult lactation ought not to be accompanied by ejaculation, and would, in fact, pose an obstacle to it.

In medieval and early modern Europe, the ancient Greek medical theories that rationalized this prohibition were still known, but it was no longer unimaginable that a father-daughter breastfeeding couple would proceed to engage in phallic sex. To make up for the weakening of the taboo on mixing milk with sperm, oral culture intervened, separating Pero from her father by a wall, as is shown in an illumination of a thirteenth-century manuscript of Solinus's *Collection of Noteworthy Things*.[54] This sketch indicates how medieval oral culture inflected artistic receptions, because the text itself clearly mentions that Pero obtained permission to enter the prison (Figure 4.3).[55] Likewise, sixteenth-century Italian artists such as Perino del Vaga, Rosso Fiorentino, Georges Reverdy, and Caravaggio show Pero nursing through the bars of a prison window, in open contrast to the – by then well-known – ancient literary tradition (Figures 1.48, 1.49, 1.50, 2.1).

At about the same time as the medieval Byzantine author embellished, and significantly altered, the anecdote about the daughter-who-breastfeeds-her-father,


*Figure 4.3: Illumination of a Manuscript by Solinus, 13th c., Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana*

a retelling of the mother-daughter lactation occurred in the *Life of Gerard*, a twelfth-century Latin epic poem.[56] Preserved in several fourteenth-century vernacular manuscripts, this poem tells of "good Berte," full of piety, charity, and "sweet loveliness," who saves her mother, a noble lady, convicted to death for a "very great infamy."[57] Going beyond Maximus in important details, the author of this Burgundian vita attributes to the daughter a name, a noble lineage, and a motivation for her deed, while the mother's crime is alluded to as adultery. There is even a short dialogue between the prison guards and Berte, who is not found out in voyeuristic fashion but voluntarily answers questions about how she keeps her mother alive. While this version is a thoroughly "modernized," i.e., feudal and Catholic, transposition of its ancient source, Michael Scotus (1175–ca. 1232) gives a fairly accurate summary of Maximus's mother-daughter anecdote in his *Philosophical Meal* a century earlier.[58] Despite his close attention to the ancient text, he leaves out any reference to Pero and Cimon – as would later writers of the fourteenth century. Scotus's contemporary, Jacques de Vitry (ca. 1170–1240), even changes the filial theme altogether in his sermon collection. In his exemplum no.

238, a "husband of a good woman" was thrown into prison but survives because his wife "nourished him with her own milk."[59]

The first medieval author to report both versions of Maximus's story is Vincent of Beauvais (ca. 1190–1264), who in his *Mirror of History* recounts, with only slight changes in syntax and word choice, Maximus's twin anecdotes. However, despite the otherwise close attention to his source, Vincent of Beauvais intervenes creatively, substituting Maximus's thoughts on affects aroused by naturalistically painted images for the use of memory with a digression on piety and love.[60] He either had no use for Maximus's theory of naturalism in the arts – a concept that much later would inspire Renaissance artists – or else found the ancient author's ekphrastic evocation of the couple's "living and breathing bodies" too immodest for his moralizing purposes. Vincent of Beauvais was also the first author to substitute Mycon's name for Cimona, thus assimilating the innocent son who voluntarily enters prison with the guilty old man that Pero pities. In another section of his book, he recounts a lactation miracle about a wealthy notary turned monk after the Virgin Mary interceded on his behalf during a terrible illness, curing him with the milk from her breasts.[61]

John of Wales (ca. 1260–1285) omits Maximus's provocative ekphrasis as well. He gives an extended summary of Maximus's example of the Roman daughter and her mother, citing the anecdote accurately, but mentions the father-daughter episode only in passing, referring to Solinus.[62] In 1297, Iacopo da Varagine neglects to mention the all-female version but quotes Maximus in his account of the cross-gendered story in his *Chronicle of the City of Genua*. He does not emulate the ekphrastic account but embellishes on the identity of the father. In his view, he was a mighty nobleman, which explains the judges' efforts to spare him a public execution. Also, he studiously notes, Pero was "married."[63]

A century later, another reference to Solinus can be found in Don Pascual de Gayangos's *Book of Examples* (14th century), in which a one-sentence summary of both anecdotes mixes the parent's gender, talking about how the daughter breastfed her mother but got her father released from prison.[64] This ambiguous reference to Solinus is all the more astonishing as Gayangos's next example refers to Maximus's anecdote about the mute son of Croesus who rescued his father. The *Dialogue of Creatures Moralyzed* (14th century; Engl. transl. 16th century) refers back to Maximus's *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, but here as well, a fairly wordy retelling of the mother-daughter episode is followed by the laconic sentence: "And a lyke tale is tolde of an agid man that was sustayned in all thinges by his doughter."[65] This deliberate censoring of Maximus's ekphrasis continues into the early sixteenth century with Bernardino de Bustis (1450–1513). His sermon collection mentions the breastfeeding daughter and her infirm father only briefly, even though the printing press by now flooded

early modern markets with full-text editions of Maximus's *Memorable Doings and Sayings* in various languages.[66]

With the exception of the *Dialogue of Creatures Moralyzed*, references to Pero and Cimon were entirely suppressed in the fourteenth century in favor of elaborate retellings of the mother-daughter story along the lines of Berte's anecdote in *Girard de Rossillon*.[67] The *Gesta Romanorum* (1342) quotes only Valerius Maximus's "unheard of, admirable spectacle" involving the "praetor and the woman," but not the story about Pero and Cimon.[68] In his book *The Moralized Game of Chess* (1347), which presents chess as an allegory of feudal society, Jacques de Cessoles (fl. 1288–1322) translates Maximus's anecdote V. 4. 7 quite accurately – but not the following one – in an attempt to define pity as a "very great goodness of heart in helping others."[69] Already in 1337, Konrad von Ammenhusen created a German version of this originally Latin text.[70] And Jean Gobi (1323–1350), another contemporary, reimagined the all-female breastfeeding episode, not the cross-gendered one, as an allegorical enactment of Catholic compassion, charity, and devotion. In his *Stairway to Heaven*, he has the mother nourished by two female ladies, one of whom offers her the "milk of repentance," the other one the "milk of devotion."[71] Gobi's allegorization of charity as a woman who gives milk to a female prisoner resonates with contemporary artistic representations of Charity in the act of breastfeeding more than one child.

In the second half of the fourteenth century, the exclusive focus on the daughter and her mother continued, albeit with a renewed emphasis on narrative representation and attention to historical detail. Boccaccio makes the "young Roman woman" the protagonist of one of his vignettes in *Famous Women* (1361–62), adding a commentary on the reciprocity of filial love and the power of female compassion:

"A wonderful thing, then, is the power of filial devotion. Not surprisingly, it pierces the hearts of women, who are easily moved to compassion and tears; but sometimes it makes its way even into cruel breasts of steel that have been deliberately hardened. Seated in the heart, filial devotion first softens every harsh act with supple kindness. Then, knowing well how to look for and find opportunities, it drives us to mingle our tears with those of the unfortunate and take (at least in sympathy) others' sickness and danger upon ourselves, and sometimes, if there are no remedies, death in their stead."

So great are the effects of filial devotion that we hardly wonder when we, as children, perform some pious deed for our parents; by so doing, we seem simply to do our duty and to repay fittingly what we have received from them.[72]

Boccaccio's story about women's empathy and compassion, as well as reciprocity in kinship relations, was illustrated numerous times. Three fifteenth-century illuminations of the breastfeeding daughter survive in French manuscript versions of his book, as well as one woodcut accompanying


*Figure 4.4: Mother and Daughter, early 15th c., Illumination, Boccaccio, De cleres et nobles femmes, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Fr. 598*

a German printed copy of *Famous Women* from 1473. The first picture, dated to 1402–03, shows the daughter seated in a fantasy landscape (Figure 1.5).[73] She wears a beautiful golden dress with a matching cap; gracefully, she offers one breast to her mother who is seated in front of her. The mother is covered in an elegantly draped red dress and a headscarf, holding her chained hands to her chest in a gesture of devotion and thankfulness. The absence of the prison environment lets the viewer focus on the daughter's charity and compassion. The second illumination, dated to the late fifteenth century, depicts a castle-like fortress with a huge window, through the bars of which we catch a glimpse of the breastfeeding couple (Figure 4.4). The daughter, dressed in a low-cut red dress and matching hat, exposes her left breast; the mother, modestly covered with a blue headdress, kneels in front of her, putting the nipple into her mouth. The third illustration presents a close-up of the window (Figure 4.5). Through the bars we see the daughter, dressed in a blue garment with a low neckline, her hair tucked away in a turban-like headgear. She stands in front of her mother, who eagerly holds on to her daughter and suckles from one huge, slightly dislocated breast. The strange placement of the daughter's bosom, reminiscent of late medieval Italian versions of the Madonna Lactans, has the effect of de-naturalizing, thus de-eroticizing, the lactation scene, while emphasizing its symbolic significance. To the right of the window, the prison

*Figure 4.5: Mother and Daughter, 15th or 16th c., Illumination, Boccaccio, De cleres et nobles femmes, Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, Fr. 599*

guard takes a good look at the two women. Scratching his beard, he seems totally absorbed by what he sees. The woodcut shows both women behind a big window secured with bars through which we can see inside. Two guards, who have not yet discovered the act, are placed in front of the closed door to the right (Figure 4.6).

Christine de Pizan's *Book of the City of Ladies* (1404) includes a retelling of Maximus's anecdote along the lines of *Famous Women*. Pizan's version of the scene contains even more narrative details concerning the daughter's feelings and state of mind than Boccaccio's, mentioning, for example, that "she begged and wept so much that the prison guards took pity on her."[74] Like Boccaccio, Pizan turns this story into an example of women's compassion and the reciprocity of mother-daughter relations. Both authors make the unusual choice of including Hygin's story about Hypsipyle in their collections of women's worthies, to which they had access through Ovid's *Heroides* (ca. 25–16 BCE). Hypsipyle, as we recall, saved her father from the rage of the women of Lemnos, in a story that Hygin presents in the context of numerous stories on violent and incestuous father-daughter relations. In Hygin's *Fables*, the story of Hypsipyle marks women's resistance against the onset of patriarchy. This combination


*Figure 4.6: Mother and Daughter, 1473, Woodcut, Boccaccio, Von den berühmten Frawen, transl. by Heinrich Steinhöwel*

of the breastfeeding daughter's and Hypsipyle's sacrifices would later be taken up by Dormont de Belloy, who in his play *Zelmire* (1762) – going back to Metastasio's opera *Issipile* (1732) – includes a filial breastfeeding scene, albeit in its paternal variety.[75] In combining Pero's story with Hypsipyle's, who pretends to have killed her father in order to save him from her fellow Lemnians, Belloy explains that he wanted to "collect in one piece what history and fables have preserved for us among the most touching and heroic instances of children's piety vis-à-vis their parents."[76] This fusion of Hypsipyle and Pero into one pious daughter exemplifies that according to Belloy, filial "heroism" consists in saving the lives of fathers who – arguably – should have died for their transgressions against a residually matrilineal society.

The fourteenth century, by contrast, stands out in its near-exclusive focus on the all-female breastfeeding scene. This happened at a time when charitable nursing was spiritually enhanced to become a universally acknowledged allegory of compassion, generosity, and humility. The flourishing of the interlocking iconographies of the Madonna Lactans and Charity are expressions of this cultural and religious trend, which, in the realm of Catholic devotion, was accompanied by food-centered practices and gendered forms of "imitatio

Christi" [imitation of Christ]. In this cultural milieu, literary adaptations of the father-daughter could not flourish. It would take until the year 1600 for another retelling of the father-daughter story to appear, in the form of a – heavily eroticized – Dutch theater play. The comeback of the paternal version in the literary tradition was accompanied by an explosion of interest in the topic among artists and their audiences. By contrast, the literary fortune of the mother-daughter story continued to thrive until the late seventeenth century while hardly leaving any traces in the visual arts – with the noteworthy exception of Poussin's *Gathering of the Manna* and a few sixteenth-century prints and drawings.

During the fifteenth century, one further literary adaptation of the theme appeared after Christine de Pizan's portrayal of the charitable daughter and her mother in the *Book of the City of Ladies*. In 1472, Albrecht von Eyb published his *Little Book on Marriage*, a humanistic treatise in favor of marriage that includes the story about the Roman mother and her pious daughter in order to convince readers of the benefits of having children.[77] In the sixteenth century, a full-fledged theater piece was devoted to the subject matter. Entitled "Morality play or Roman story about a woman who wanted to betray the city of Rome and about the daughter who nourished her for six weeks with her milk in prison" (1548), this French play enables mother and daughter to have their voices be heard in front of the Roman court.[78] Quite unlike the protagonists of Maximus's anecdote, the women are not mute expressions of allegorized piety but real persons who talk at great length about their misery. In this respect, they resemble the courageous women of his chapter on "Women who Pleaded before Magistrates for Themselves or for Others," some of whom Maximus approves of, and some of whom he chides for disrupting the all-male sphere of judicial procedures. In the play, the mother laments her fate and repents her crime of treason, while the daughter engages the judges in a lengthy debate about her mother's sentence. Proposing that they rather amputate their tongues and one leg each instead of decapitating her, the daughter negotiates with the court, trying to obtain mercy. The judges Oracius and Valerius at first insist on rendering justice but eventually are moved to pity, converting the mother's sentence into death by starvation.[79] Once inside the prison, the mother is encouraged by her daughter to be patient and strong, but she increasingly complains about her indigence and wants. She solicits help from her daughter in recompense for the trouble she took in raising her.[80] The daughter immediately responds that she cannot bear to hear of her cruel pain any more and offers her the milk from her breast.[81] Inquiring why the mother is still alive after several weeks, the judges admire the daughter's true "maternal" love and officially release the mother. The play ends with the mother profusely thanking God and the judges. The daughter downplays her mother's praise, explaining modestly: "I am very beholden to you, because I know that I came into this world through you."[82]

In 1555, Johannes Herold gives a verbatim account of Maximus's anecdote in his *Examples of Virtues and Vices*.[83] In 1569, Hans Sachs writes a short story about "Romana, the Suckling Daughter" with an explicit reference to "Joannes Bocacius."[84] He frames his story as a lament about the indifference and ungratefulness of the "children of this world," who no longer cherish their parents, as did the Roman daughter.[85] While following Boccaccio's story closely, Sachs introduces slight but important plot changes: he treats the mother's crime apologetically, by mentioning that "once, she forgot herself, and violated Roman law," and he emphasizes that the "daughter suckled with lust / her mother with breasts rich in milk."[86] This is to my knowledge the only instance of eroticizing the all-female breastfeeding episode in literature.

It took until 1630 for the next textual reference to appear, in Bishop Paolo Aresi's *Sacred Enterprises*, a voluminous sermon collection on Christ and all saints. Summarizing Maximus's story, Aresi emphasizes the theme of generational reversal and reciprocity in kinship relations by spelling out that "she who was in reality mother appeared daughter, while the daughter became the nurse of her from whom she in her childhood suckled milk."[87] This beautiful symmetry is amplified a generation later by Sibylle Schwarz von Greiffswald aus Pommern, who ends her poem "A Daughter Suckles her Mother" (1650) with the line: "We both want to be daughters, and both mothers [to each other]."[88] The literary tradition of the mother-daughter breastfeeding episode comes to an end in the late seventeenth century with the sermon collection of Abraham de Sancta Clara (1644–1709), who, in referring to Pliny the Elder, recounts the story of the foundation of a temple dedicated to Piety in 183 BCE.[89]

Among the many literary adaptations of Maximus's mother-daughter anecdote, Berte's story in Girard de Rossillon (12th/14th century) stands out in terms of the liberty it takes in reimagining the event. It is perhaps the first to psychologize and religiously enhance the daughter's sacrifice, framing it in the context of Catholic charity. It also adds important information about the mother's social background and crime and substitutes the guards' voyeurism with an explanatory dialogue. Boccaccio's story follows suit, adding even more narrative detail and attention to realistic representation, as well as moralizing commentary. His vignette of the "young Roman woman" would become the basis for subsequent adaptations by Christine de Pizan and Hans Sachs as well as for eighteenth-century playwrights such as Dormont de Belloy. Perhaps the most creative among all rewrites is the French morality tale of 1548, which transforms into dialogue what Maximus and later ancient authors envisioned as mute allegory. By letting the women argue, negotiate, and lament in court, the play almost defeats the story's original purpose, namely, to focus on women's body language as delivering morally important content about the reciprocity of maternal relations and their charitable transfer to needy "others." In a certain sense, the continuing interest in this episode seems to derive specifically from

the rhetorical tension between universalizing allegorization and situated, detailed, narrative, and historical knowledge.

The literary adaptations of Pero and Cimon's story follow a different trajectory. After a muted reference to Maximus's anecdote by Vincent de Beauvais (ca. 1190–1264), who leaves out the ekphrasis and changes the father's name to Cimon, a summary of Solinus's entry by John of Wales (ca. 1260–1285) in yet another attempt to censor Maximus's vision of a painting, and the retelling by Iacopo di Varagine in 1297, the textual adaptations stop altogether until 1600. During this hiatus of more than 300 years, when literary adaptations of the mother-daughter story flourished and oral culture promoted the father-daughter story as a riddle, visual representations of Pero and Cimon started to emerge in the early sixteenth century. Like their ancient precedents, these artistic renderings sought to eroticize the theme, in sync with Maximus's ekphrastic challenge to depict the scene as a trompe-l'oeil, i.e., to conjure up "living, and breathing bodies" in front of the viewer's eyes. Innumerable printed editions of Maximus's *Memorable Doings and Sayings* in various European languages turned both episodes of filial breastfeeding into ubiquitously known cultural resources about Roman antiquity. Any literary reference to Pero and Cimon since the seventeenth century thus resonates with deep prior knowledge about the event, either through the study of Maximus's book, oral culture, or visual representations in the form of coins, chessboard decorations, ceramic bowls, prints, sculptures, and paintings.

In addition, literary adaptations of Pero and Cimon were enhanced by or mixed with references to actually existing practices of adult lactation for medical purposes, especially between old men and young women. This is the case with Giordano Bruno's play *The Candle Bearer* (1582). Bruno introduces the motif of "breasting" – as adult nursing was called in Italian and French [It. tettare; Fr. têter] – right at the beginning, with a dedication to "You who suckle [tettate] on the muse of mamma, and who thrive on her greasy broth with your snout, hear me, your Excellency, if faith and charity inflame your heart. I cry for, ask for, beg for an epigram, a sonnet, a marriage poem, a hymn, an ode that could be placed in the breast [I suck] or the broth [I eat]."[90] In Act IV, scene 8, lecherous Bonifacio, an old man in love with a young prostitute, converses with Marta, a middle-aged lady. Quarreling about how appropriate it is for men or women to act on their sexual desires at an advanced age, Bonifacio declares: "God … has made the women for [the pleasure of] men, not the men for [the pleasure of] women … Isn't this what the doctors prescribed to Patriarch David, and, not long ago, to a certain holy father who … aroused himself too much and had to be breastfed and he suckled and so it's no wonder if …" – whereupon Marta interrupts him, interjecting: "Well, he put too much pepper to the milk-thistle."[91] Bonifacio's and Marta's pun is an irreverent reference to Pope Innocent VIII (1432–92) and his remedy of last resort, prescribed

to him by his doctors, namely, to suckle milk from a wet-nurse. A few days before he died, Filippo Valori, orator among the Otto di Pratica, a papal office dealing with foreign affairs, wrote in a letter to Giovanni Burcardo: "The last two nights His Holiness got worse and worse and has become so weak that he eats little more than woman's milk."[92] While Bruno does not mention Pero and Cimon specifically, other theatrical performances do so, according to Renzo Villa, who mentions a tableau vivante of Roman Charity conducted at Florence in 1589.[93]

Finally, in the year 1600, Dutch playwright Jacob Duym officially resumes the literary tradition of Pero and Cimon by publishing *The Mirror of Love*, "taken from Valerius Maximus as well as other writers … [and written] in the manner of a tragicomedy."[94] This is – to present-day readers – a surprisingly outspoken play, which gives clear directions about who should play the role of Pero (here called Cimona): "Cimona should be a woman of ca. twenty years … she should have two big and beautiful breasts … in order to imagine her love all the more clearly."[95] Duym repeats Vincent de Beauvais's identification of Mycon with Cimon, son of Miltiades, in order to prevent Cimona (Pero) from having to breastfeed a guilty man. Instead of heated dialogues, which characterize the morality play of 1548, this play offers monologues. Cimona (Pero), for example, delivers a long introspective speech the first time she is on her way to the prison, in which she first laments about her father's fate, then reminisces about his kindness when she was young, and finally determines to offer him her breast:

"You have proved to me your love so often when I was a child; you were a true father to me … I cannot ever properly thank you, but Nature asks that I should help you … I bring here food and drink … with my motherly breasts; I will deny them and my love to my own child; once I suckled my mother's breasts, now my father here shall consume my milk."[96]

This somewhat incongruous appeal to the symmetry of the mother-daughter version is supposed to render the breastfeeding scene, which is soon to take place in full view of the audience, morally intelligible. Once inside the dungeon, Cimona (Pero) announces to her father that she found a solution to his dire situation; when he asks her what she has in mind, "she takes out her breast and offers it to her father," saying "I bring you my breast … it is very full and engorged."[97] Instead of immediately putting the nipple to his mouth, Cimon resists for a while, exclaiming: "Who would have ever seen or heard that a father should suckle the milk from his child?"[98] Soon, however, he is persuaded to do so, starts suckling, and says in great relief: "Now I am much refreshed, my pains are all gone, o dearest daughter of mine, I owe you many thanks."[99] The guard then reports the scene to the mayor of town, who subsequently releases Cimon from prison. This play is fairly astonishing for the amount of nudity displayed and for the eroticism of the delicate scene at its center.

In early seventeenth-century Venice, Giovanni Felice Astolfi published a collection of moralizing tales in the manner of Valerius Maximus, from whom he took quite a few ideas. In Chapter 20 of his *Curious Selection … of Various Ancient and Modern Stories* (1602), which deals with the "extreme love of children versus their fathers," he refers to the story of Pero and Cimon as a ubiquitous topic in the visual arts: "I repeat here the unique example of filial piety, which serves painters wonderfully as an ornament of their art."[100] This suggests that in 1602, i.e., four years before Caravaggio rendered the topic famous in Italy and ten years before Rubens first painted it, the subject matter was already well enough known in the visual arts for writers to casually refer to it as an illustration of their texts. Unfortunately, almost none of these early Italian paintings have survived. Inventories suggest that in sixteenth-century Venice, copies of *Pero and Cimon* existed that were subsequently lost;[101] a photocopy of a Venetian rendering from the 1520s, last seen on the Viennese art market in 1922, is further proof of the early dissemination of the topic as a gallery painting (Figure 1.2).[102] The only Italian oil paintings that have survived from the sixteenth century are two anonymous works of art by a Roman and Bolognese artist, respectively (Figures 2.11 and 2.12).

In 1603, the topic makes its appearance again, in Agrippa d'Aubigné's preface to one of his epic poems. In "The author to his book," d'Aubigné identifies himself with the father, his book with his son, and proceeds: "We have to do it like the nurse and daughter of the elderly Roman, whereby you nurse me and cherish your father in exile."[103] A more substantial reference can be found by mid-century in Secondo Lancelotti's *Impostures of Ancient Historians* (1647), a satirical and pseudo-scientific discussion of various stories, beliefs, and legends deriving from ancient literature and philosophy. Discussing the question of how long men can subsist on milk alone, Lancelotti criticizes Plutarch and Athenaeus for being too uncritical in repeating Aristotle's and Theophrastes's story of Philinus, who was said to have consumed only milk during his entire life. In his fastidiously long footnotes, Lancelotti mentions that according to Galen, milk consumption can prolong life, but not if eaten exclusively. The Scythians ate meat in addition to milk, according to Hippocrates; Zoroaster seems to have lived on nothing but milk, but only for six months; and Schenckius, a contemporary medical writer, observed that a young girl who ingested milk only died at age sixteen.[104] Complaining that these ancient Greek authors do not inform us whether Philinus's milk was from a sheep, goat, cow, or donkey, whether he did not have appetite for any other nourishment, and whether he was a bourgeois or a peasant, rich or poor – in his eyes, all important details to render the story credible – Lancelotti concludes that the story is as extraordinary as it is fabulous. In his long footnote to Philinus, he approves of Pliny's and Maximus's examples of filial piety, declaring that "those daughters who nourished their fathers with their milk did not do so for a long time," but

ridicules Athenaeus's story of Sagarin, who "took his milk from a wet-nurse for his pleasure, and for not having to masticate." He finds both Pliny's and Maximus's anecdotes laudable and credible, because the nursing went on for several days only, but expresses his outrage at the story of Sagarin, "who suckles from [tetta] his nurse his entire life long out of voluptuousness."[105] In addition to Bruno's satirical treatment of Pope Innocent VIII's use of a wet-nurse in his last illness, Lancelotti's text is the first to explicitly eroticize adult breastfeeding in old men, while Hans Sachs, as we recall, even spoke of the daughter's "lüesten" in nursing her mother. In 1662, Jan Vos (1612–67), a Dutch playwright, refers, likewise, to "lust" in an ekphrastic poem on a painting of *Pero and Cimon,* in possession of Jo[h]an Huidekooper.[106]

It would take more than a century for another textual reference to appear, this time in England. Inspired either by Duym or directly by Maximus, Arthur Murphy devoted an entire play to Pero and Cimon, entitled *The Grecian Daughter.*[107] This apparently very successful tragedy debuted in 1782, with Sarah Siddons in the title role. Because of her many pregnancies, and the fact that she was known for returning to work soon after delivery, this famous actress might have given a very realistic rendering of the breastfeeding scene.[108] However, it appears as if the nursing took place off-stage, with the two guards reporting on the scene as they watched it, thus enacting the ekphrastic, or better voyeuristic, effect of Maximus's two anecdotes. Carefully avoiding any erotic charge, Murphy stresses the daughter's innocent, i.e., maternal, motivations, as well as the father's pure gratefulness:

> On the bare earth
> Evander (Cimon) lies; and as his languid pow'rs
> Imbibe with eager thirst the kind refreshment
> And his looks speak unutterable thanks
> Euphrasia (Pero) views him with the tend'rest glance
> E'en as a mother doating on her child
> And, even and anon, amidst the smiles
> Of pure delight, of exquisite sensation
> A silent tear steals down, the tear of virtue,
> That sweetens grief to rapture! All her laws
> Inverted quite, great Nature triumphs still.[109]

In contrast to Murphy's sentimental approach to filial piety, Giovan Battista Casti openly eroticizes the theme of adult nursing in his *Amorous Novels* (1804). Rather than explicitly referring to Pero and Cimon, Casti seems inspired by Secondo Lancelotti and his discussion of milk diets in old men, as well as by Giordano Bruno's comedy *The Candle Bearer.* In Bruno's comedy, as we recall, the elderly Bonifacio justifies his lecherous behavior by mentioning both King David and

Pope Innocent VIII's encounter with a wet-nurse, the latter being (in)famous for his lovers and the two children he legitimized.[110] In Kings 1:1, it is reported that Abishaig the Shunammite, a virgin, was charged with keeping old King David warm at night, without sleeping with him, however.[111] For Bruno, this biblical indictment against intercourse with King David was enough to phantasize about a breastfeeding relationship along the lines of Pope Innocent VIII and his wet-nurse, even though the Bible text does not suggest that David suckled from Abishaid – after all, she was a virgin – and despite the fact that the "chaste" nature of Innocent's relationship with his nurse was immediately doubted by Marta, who interjects: "He put too much pepper to the milk-thistle." Drawing on these precedents, Casti elaborates on both the biblical and the clerical themes in his comical and pornographic novel *The Two Shunammites*. When Bishop Don Andronico develops the usual health problems of old men, "catarrh, fatigue, and cough," the doctor prescribes an all-milk diet. Don Andronico immediately insists that he receive the "milk of a young woman" instead of animal milk. The doctor quickly employs a beautiful young woman, Gnesa, "with two boobs of such beauty to seduce the most holy of men, overflowing with milk."[112] At first, the doctor offers to Don Andronico her milk in a glass, but then he decides to let Gnesa lay with Don Andronico, after the example of King David and the Shunammite, "and Monsignor started suckling [poppò]."[113] But then, "Gnesa, because of the suckling, felt such great tickle … that she kissed him."[114] The doctor, meanwhile, procures a second wet-nurse, to make more milk available for Don Andronico, who is on a strict milk diet. In the end, both women remain pregnant, while the bishop wonders why he, a "poor impotent man," gets blamed for "profanating" the diocese.[115] Casti's story, while not explictly quoting Pero and Cimon, elaborates on the wider theme of adult breastfeeding in old men and parodies lactation practices for medicinal reasons. The sexualization of the motif is carried to an extreme. This is the last one in a long line of literary adaptions and echoes of Maximus's anecdotes on "filial piety." What is perhaps most noteworthy is the divergent reception of the same-sex and cross-gendered anecdote by writers and visual artists. Narratives of the mother-daughter couple acquired fame as examples of charity and reciprocity in kinship relations especially in the fourteenth century, when Pero and Cimon seemed all but forgotten. They continued to inspire writers until the seventeenth century alongside literary adaptations of the father-daughter scene, even though artistic representations of the mother and her daughter remained rare. Pero and Cimon, by contrast, assumed cult status among Baroque artists and their audiences. While literary adaptations of the mother-daughter breastfeeding scene tend to stress the women's performance of reciprocity in kinship relations, stories about young women who nurse old men conflate with medical accounts – most notably, Pope Innocent VIII's use of a wet-nurse shortly before he died. As we will see in Chapter 5, milk-diets in old men and medicinal nursing were widely discussed remedies in early modern medical discourse.

## Notes

**1** | On Spain, see Demófilo, pseud., *Coleccion de Enigmas y Adivinanzas en forma de diccionario*, ed. by Antonio Machado y Alvarez (Sevilla: Imp. de R. Baldaraque, 1880), no. 238; on Italy, *see Indovinelli popolari veneziani*, ed. by Domenico Giuseppe Bernoni (Venice: Tipografia Antonelli, 1874), no. 63; Archer Taylor, "Straparola's Riddle of Pero and Cimon and Its Parallels," *Romance Philology* 1, no. 3 (1947): 297–303; Giovanni Francesco Straparola, *Le Piacevoli Notti*, ed. by Donato Pirovano (Rome: Salerno, 2000; first ed. Venice: Orpheo Dalla Carta tien per insegna S. Alvise, 1550), vol. II, 511–13; on Greece, see Émile Legrand, *Recueil de Contes Populaires* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1881), 47–51; G. Georgeakis and Léon Pineau, *Le Folk-Lore de Lesbos* (Paris: J. Maisonneuve, Libraire-Éditeur, 1894), 108; on Germany: *New vermehrtes Rath-Büchlein mit allerhand Weltlich- und Geistlichen Fragen sampt deren* Beantwortungen (no place, 1600), no pagination; on Pomerania, Serbia, and Albania, see Ulrich Jahn, *Volkssagen aus Pommern und Rügen* (Berlin: Mayer & Müller, 1889), 540, no. 669; and Reinhold Köhler, "Eingemauerte Menschen," in: *Aufsätze über Märchen und Volkslieder*, ed. by Johann Bolte und Erich Schmidt (Berlin: Weidmann, 1894), 38ss; both quoted in: Georg Knaack, "Die säugende Tochter: ein Beitrag zur vergleichenden Volkskunde," *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Literaturgeschichte* 12, Neue Folge, nos. 5–6 (1898): 450–54.

**2** | See a list of titles in World Cat [accessed 11/16/12].

**3** | Ferdinand Edward Cranz and Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Catalogus translationum et commentariorum: Mediaeval and Renaissance Latin Translations and Commentaries* (Washington (DC): Catholic University of America Press, 1960–2003), vol. 5, 288–403.

**4** | Clive Skidmore, *Practical Ethics for Roman Gentlemen: The Work of Valerius Maximus* (Exeter; Devon, UK: University of Exeter Press, 2002); W. Martin Bloomer, *Valerius Maximus & the Rhetoric of the New Nobility* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992).

**5** | Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, ed. and transl. by D.R. Shackleton Bailey and David Roy (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000), vol. 1, 185, no. II.7.6.

**6** | Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, vol. 1, 185, no. II.7.6.

**7** | Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, vol. 1, 369, no. IV.3.3.

**8** | Skidmore, *Practical Ethics for Roman Gentlemen*, 108–12.

**9** | "Women used to dine seated with their reclining menfolk, a custom which made its way from the social gatherings of men to things divine. For at the banquet of Jupiter he himself was invited to dine on a couch, while Juno and Minerva had chairs, a form of austerity which our age is more careful to retain on the Capitol than in its houses, no doubt because it is more important to the commonwealth that discipline be maintained for goddesses than for women." Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, vol. 1, 129–31, no. II.1.

**10** | Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, vol. 1, 499, no. V.4.7.

**11** | Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, vol. 1, 503, no. V.4. ext. 1.
**12** | Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, vol. 1, 495, no. V.4.1 (Coriolanus); Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, vol. 1, 503–05, no. V.4. ext. 4 (Cleobis and Biton).
**13** | Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, vol. 1, 499, no. V.4.6.
**14** | "Forgive me, most ancient hearth, give me your pardon, eternal fire, if the scheme of my work advance from your most sacred temple to a place in the city more necessary than splendid. For by no harshness of Fortune, no squalor, is the value of dear piety cheapened; on the contrary, the more unhappy in the trial, the more certain." Maximus, M*emorable Doings and Sayings*, vol. 1, 499–501, no. V.4.7.
**15** | Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, vol. 1, 499–501, no. V.4.7.
**16** | Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, vol. 2, 211–13, no. VIII.3.
**17** | Jutta Sperling, "'Divenni madre e figlia di mio padre.' Queer Lactations in Renaissance and Baroque Art," in: *Sex Acts: Practice, Performance, Perversion and Punishment in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Allison Levy (Farnham, Surrey; Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2010), 165–80.
**18** | Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, vol. 1, 501–03, no. V.4. ext. 1.
**19** | Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, vol. 1, 503, no. V.4. ext. 3; 489, no. V.3.3.
**20** | *Apollodorus' Library and Hyginus' Fabulae: Two Handbooks of Greek Mythology*, ed. and transl. by R. Scott Smith and Stephen M. Trzaskoma (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2007), 174, no. 254.
**21** | Smith and Trzaskoma, *Apollodorus' Library and Hyginus' Fabulae*, 173, no. 254.
**22** | Smith and Trzaskoma, *Apollodorus' Library and Hyginus' Fabulae*, 174, no. 254.
**23** | Smith and Trzaskoma, *Apollodorus' Library and Hyginus' Fabulae*, 104, no. 15.
**24** | Smith and Trzaskoma, *Apollodorus' Library and Hyginus' Fabulae*, 122, no. 74.
**25** | Smith and Trzaskoma, *Apollodorus' Library and Hyginus' Fabulae*, 104, no. 15.
**26** | Smith and Trzaskoma, *Apollodorus' Library and Hyginus' Fabulae*, 163, no. 193.
**27** | Smith and Trzaskoma, *Apollodorus' Library and Hyginus' Fabulae*, 143, no. 130.
**28** | Smith and Trzaskoma, *Apollodorus' Library and Hyginus' Fabulae*, 117, no. 60.
**29** | Smith and Trzaskoma, *Apollodorus' Library and Hyginus' Fabulae*, 126, no. 88.
**30** | Smith and Trzaskoma, *Apollodorus' Library and Hyginus' Fabulae*, 122, no. 72.
**31** | Smith and Trzaskoma, *Apollodorus' Library and Hyginus' Fabulae*, 174, no. 254.
**32** | *Pietas e allattamento filiale: La vicenda, l'exemplum, l'iconografia*; colloquio di Urbino, 2–3 May, 1996, ed. by Renato Raffaelli, Roberto M. Danese, and Settimio Lanciotti (Urbino: Quattro Venti, 1997), 129, Table I; 131, Table III; 132, Table IV; 127, Table VII.1; 127, Table VII.2. On the Sigillata shard: Elisabeth R. Knauer, "Caritas Romana," *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 6, Neue Folge (1964): 9–23, especially 9.
**33** | Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, ed. by John Bostock, M.D., F.R.S., and H.T. Riley, Esq., B.A. (London: H.G. Bohn, 1855–57), book VII, chapter 36, 2180–81; http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0137%3Abook%-3D7%3Achapter%3D36; [accessed 1/3/13].
**34** | Pliny the Elder (23–79 CE), *Natural History*, ed. by W.H.S. Jones (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963), vol. VIII, book XXI, 53.

**35** | Festus Grammaticus, *De la signification des mots*, ed. and transl. by M.A. Savagner, books 1 and 2 (Paris: C.L.F. Panckoucke, 1846); http://remacle.org/bloodwolf/erudits/Festus/p.htm; [accessed 1/3/13].

**36** | "Indeed a nobler example of piety occurred in the house of the Metelli, but most eminently, it can be found in a plebeian woman who just gave birth, humble and therefore of obscurer fame. When that woman was allowed to visit her father who was held in jail because of a death penalty, she was often examined by the doorkeepers that she might not bring food to her father – yet, she was caught feeding him with her breasts. This event, place, and deed were consecrated. For he, who was destined to death, is remembered as a gift to his daughter. The place, consecrated to him, is a sanctuary of divine piety." Gaius Julius Solinus, *Collectanea rerum memorabilium*, ed. by Theodor Mommsen (Berlin: Weidmann, 1895), 39–30, no. 124–25; http://books.google.com/books?id=VNm5mjWUzMoC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false; [accessed 1/3/13]. Settimio Lancelotti, "Pietas e allattamento negli scholia vallicelliana," in: *Allattamento filiale: la fortuna*, colloquio di Urbino, 28–29 aprile 1998, ed. by Roberto M. Danese, Daniela De Agostini, Renato Raffaelli, and Gioia Zaganelli (Urbino: Quattro Venti, 2000), 203–07.

**37** | "There lay the man fettered in the depths of the earth, with no drink, no food, seeing no man, there in a cavern dug deep under the soil he lay in agony ... There was a band of jailers watching the imprisoned man, but his clever daughter outwitted them with delusive words, a young nursing mother, when she uttered a mournful appeal: ... "Do not let me die, watchmen, I have nothing here, I have brought no drink and no food for my father! ... If you do not believe me, if you do not believe, undo my innocent girdle, tear off my veil, shake my dress – I have brought no drink to save his life! Do but shut me up too with my father in the deep pit. I am nothing for you to fear, nothing, even if the king hears of it. Who is angry with one who pities a corpse? Who is angry with one dying a cruel death? Who does not pity the dead? I will close my father's sinking eyes. Shut me up there: who grudges death? Let us die together, and let one tomb receive daughter and father!" Her pleading won them. The girl ran into the den, bringing light for her father's darkness. In that pit, she let the milk of her breast flow into her father's mouth, to avert his destruction, and felt no fear. Deriades (the king) marvelled to hear the pious deed of Eërië. He set free the clever girl's father from his prison, like a ghost; the fame of it was noised abroad, and the Indian people praised the girl's breast, which had saved a life by its cunning." Nonnos of Panoplis/Nonnus of Panopolis, *Dionysiaca*, transl. by W.H.D. Rouse (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1940), vol. II, 301–03.

**38** | Émile Legrand, *Recueil de Contes Populaires;* Greek version in: *Tzetzae Allegoriae Iliadis*, ed. by Jean François Boissonade (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1967, reprint of ed. Paris, 1851), 340.

**39** | Legrand, *Recueil de Contes Populaires*, 50.

**40** | Legrand, *Recueil de Contes Populaires*, 51.

**41** | "Algun dia fuí hija / Ahora soy madre / El príncipe que mis pechos crian / Es marido de mi madre / Acertadla, caballeros, / Y si no dadme à mi padre." Demófilo (pseud.), *Coleccion de Enigmas,* no. 238.

**42** | "Indovina, indovinatore: / Mi son figlia d'un gran signore; / Ancuo son figlia, e doman mare; / Late un figlio maschio, mario de mia mare." *Indovinelli popolari veneziani*, ed. by G. Bernoni, no. 63.

**43** | Georgeakis and Pineau, *Le Folk-Lore de Lesbos*, 108.

**44** | "Durch Seulen gesogen / ist Herren betrogen / des Tochter ist was / des Mutter bin ich worden / ich hab meiner Mutter ein schönen Mann gezogen?" *New vermehrtes Rath-Büchlein,* no pagination. See also Paul Kretschmer, "Zur Geschichte von der 'säugenden Tochter'," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 43, no. 1 (1899): 151–57; for reference to Strafsburger (Straßburger?) Rätselbuch from 1505, see 154.

**45** | Knaack, "Die säugende Tochter," 450–51.

**46** | Taylor, "Straparola's Riddle."

**47** | Taylor, "Straparola's Riddle," 298–99.

**48** | Straparola, *Le Piacevoli Notti*, 512.

**49** | Carla Freccero, *Queer / Early / Modern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 56.

**50** | On Pero and Cimon in the context of proverbs and riddle culture, see Giovanni Battista Bronzini, "La Figlia che allatta il padre: Analisi morfologico-strutturale del motivo incestuoso nella letteratura popolare," in: Raffaelii et al., *Pietas e allattamento* filiale, 199–226.

**51** | Roberto M. Danese, "Lac Humanum Fellare. La trasmissione del latte e la linea della generazione," in: Raffaelii et al., *Pietas e allattamento filiale,* 40–72.

**52** | Peter Parkes, "Alternative Social Structures and Foster Relations in the Hindu Kush: Milk Kinship Allegiance in Former Mountain Kingdoms of Northern Pakistan," *Comparative Studies in History and Society* 43, no. 1 (2001): 4–36, especially 10.

**53** | "Lesbians can be cured by drinking something else." *The Daily Currant*, 26 August, 2012. http://dailycurrant.com/2012/08/26/todd-akin-claims-breast milk-cures-homosexuality/ [accessed 1/8/13].

**54** | Anna Tuck-Scala, "Caravaggio's 'Roman Charity' in the Seven Acts of Mercy," in: *Parthenope's Splendor: Art of the Golden Age in Naples*, ed. by Jeanne Chenault Porter and Susan Scott Munshower (College Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 127–63, especially 133. Grazia Maria Fachechi believes the manuscript dates to the fourteenth century. Grazia Maria Fachechi, "L'iconografia della Caritas Romana dal Medioevo a Caravaggio," in: Raffaelii et al., *Pietas e allattamento filiale,* 227–45, especially 227.

**55** | Miniature in: codice C 246, 13th c., Biblioteca Ambrosiana, fol. 10r, "Humble and therefore of obscurer fame: When that woman was allowed to visit her father who was held in jail because of a death penalty, she was often examined by the door keepers that she might not bring food to her father – yet, she was caught feeding him with her breasts." Solinus, Latin quote in: Fachechi, "L'iconografia della Caritas Romana," 227.

**56** | Jean Misrahi, "The Origina of 'De Roussillon'," *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 51, no. 1 (1936): 8–12.
**57** | Anon., "Girard de Rossillon" (written between 1155–1180), in: *Poème Bourguignon du XIVe siècle*, ed. by Edward Billings Ham (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936), 196–97, lines 3049–84.
**58** | "In the same work [by Valerius Maximus], at chapter four: A magistrate handed over a free-born [Roman] woman, who was to be punished by death, to a certain man in prison in order to have her killed. That man was moved by pity and did not strangle her immediately. Solicited, he gave permission to her daughter [to meet her] and took care that she did not bring any food so that she would starve to death. Yet some days having passed, he wondered how she survived so long and he observed the daughter attentively, who – after pulling out her breast – calmed her mother's hunger with her own reserve of milk. When the novelty of this deed was conveyed to the council, the woman obtained the remission of her penalty. What does piety not think of, what is so unusual than to nurture a mother with the breasts of her daughter? Anyone would think of this as contrary to the nature of things if to love one's parents was not the first law of nature." Michael Scotus, *Mensa Philosophica seu Enchiridion* (Frankfurt: Typis Wolfgangi Richteri, 1602), 116. http://books.google.com/books?id=USdDAAAAcAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=snippet&q=filia&f=false [accessed 10/29/12].
**59** | Jacques de Vitry, "Sermones Vulgares," in: *The Exempla: Illustrative Stories from the Sermones Vulgares*, ed. by Thomas Frederick Crane (Nendeln: Kraus Reprint, 1967), 232.
**60** | "A magistrate handed over a freeborn [Roman] woman, who was condemned in his tribunal to capital punishment, to be killed in prison. Yet the man who was in charge of guarding her was moved by pity and did not strangle her immediately. He also allowed entrance [into the prison] to her daughter, who was diligently examined that she did not carry anything with her, expecting that she [the mother] would die of starvation. Yet some days having passed, he wondered what happened that she should survive for so long. With greater attention he observed the daughter, who had pulled out her breasts and assuaged her mother's hunger with her own milk. When this admirable, spectacular novelty was conveyed to the judges, the woman obtained the remission [of her sentence]. For what does piety not penetrate, what does it not devise, what is so unusual and unheard of than for a mother to be fed by her daughter's breasts? Would one not think of this occurrence as contrary to the nature of things? It is not, because the first law of nature is to love one's parents.

The same piety is said of Pero. Her father Cimon was struck by a similar fate, being handed over to prison as well. Of very high age, she nourished him with her breasts like a child. Men's eyes are struck and surprised when they see a painted image of this event. Other virtues merit much admiration; but piety merits great love as well." Vincent de Beauvais, "Speculum Historiale," in: *Bibliotheca Mundi seu Speculi Marioris Vincentii Burgundi Praesulis Bellovacensis, Ordinis Praedicatorum*, Tomus quartus, qui

speculum historiale inscribitur ... Omnia nunc accuratè recognita, distinctè ordinata ... (Duaci: B. Belleri, 1624), 218–19; http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k81676r.r=%22Bibliotheca+mundi%22.langEN [accessed 6/24/15].

**61** | Vincent de Beauvais, "Speculum Historiale," in: *La vierge et le miracle: Le speculum historiale de Vincent de Beauvais*, ed. by Michel Tarayre (Paris: Champion, 1999), 45–47.

**62** | "And with regard to the piety of children towards their parents, Valerius said many things very well, in book 5, chapter 8: that to love one's father or parents is the first law of nature. Therefore he gives an account of a daughter who nurtured her mother with the milk of her breasts. For when her mother was in jail, condemned to capital punishment, the person who was in charge of watching the prison was moved by compassion and gave the daughter access to her mother, taking care, however, that she would take nothing with her, reckoning that her mother would run out of food soon. Yet when some days passed and when he wondered how long she would sustain herself, he observed the daughter more attentively. For the daughter calmed her mother's hunger, aided by her own milk. This spectacular and admirable novelty led him to the following deliberation: He obtained a remission of the woman's penalty. At the same place [in the book], it is spoken of another [daughter] who nurtured her father who was in a similar imprisonment. That father, who was already of high age, she nurtured like a child with the nourishment of her breasts. And of this, Solinus speaks at the end of book 1, where he speaks of a daughter who was caught feeding her father with her breasts. And he too was given to his daughter and saved up in the memory of all public criers; and the place is consecrated to the divinity." John of Wales, *Summa collationum*. *Explicit Galensis summa venustissima atque lepidissima summa collectionum, alio nomine sive Communiloquium vocitata* (Augsburg: Anton Sorg, 1475), no pagination, secunda pars, distinction secunda, capitulum secundum, rectus-versus; http://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/~db/0004/bsb00043211/images/index.html?id=00043211&groesser=&fip=xsqrswweayafsdrfsdrsdasyzts&no=24&seite=174; [accessed 7/7/15].

**63** | "And in order to show these three things, Valerius Maximus gave three examples. For in order to show that daughters must aid parents whenever they are caught in exigency, he tells us that when a certain noble, powerful and already aged man had committed a crime, due to that man's honor, the judge did not wish to punish him to death in public, but locked him up in prison that he might die there of starvation. His daughter, however, who was married, visited him daily in jail with the judge's permission. Yet before that, she underwent careful examination that she would not carry any food with her. Nevertheless, on every single day, she pulled out her breast and fed her father with her own milk. For when the judge was astonished that the man survived for such a long time, he arranged that the guards watched her through a chink [hostii] whenever the daughter met her father. When the guards observed that the daughter fed her father with her milk, they informed the judge. He, however, was moved by her piety and released the father to his daughter." *Iacopo da Varagine e la sua cronaca di Genova dalle origini al MXXCXVII* (= Fonti per la storia d'Italia; Scrittori, secolo XIII; vol. 85), ed. by Giovanni Monleone (Rome: Tipografia dello stato, 1941–xix), vol. 2, 210.

**64** | "Solinus tell us that ... it was related that a daughter maintained her mother with the milk of her breasts, and that the father was returned to the daughter." Don Pascual de Gayangos, "El libro de los Enxemplos," in: *Biblioteca Autores Españoles, desde la formacion del lenguaje hasta nuestros dias. Escritores en prosa anteriores al siglo XV*, ed. by Don Pascual de Gayangos (Madrid: M. Rivadeneyra, 1884), 443–542; see 471, example no. 102.

**65** | "Moreover Valery tellyth libro quinto, that whan a noble woman was comytted unto warde for a greate offence and there shulde have perisshed through hongir, her owne dowghter that was weddyd by the lycence of the iuge visited her daylye, but first she was serchyd with greate dylygence, that she shulde bere withe her no mete. But she daylye drough owt her brestis and fed her modir with her owne mylke. At laste the iuge mouyd with greate pyete, gave the modir to the doughter." *The Dialogue of Creatures Moralysed*, ed. by Gregory Kratzmann and Elizabeth Gee (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1988), 199–200.

**66** | "In book 5, Valerius relates that a certain Roman woman was condemned to capital punishment by the chief magistrate and put into prison that she might die of hunger. The guard of the prison, however, conceded to her daughter to visit her mother – taking nevertheless care that she would take nothing [to eat] for her mother. When that condemned woman survived several days, the above-mentioned guard was surprised and observed her daughter, and he discovered that she nurtured her mother with her milk. That discovery obtained the mother her release. And the above-mentioned scholar adds: One would believe this to be contrary to the fact of nature if it was not the first law of nature to love one's parents. Also, Solinus gives an example similar to that in almost all respects: of a certain old and aged father who was nurtured by his daughter in prison in such way. Valerius also relates in the above-mentioned book of another woman who nurtured her father like an infant with the nourishment of her breasts, who could not eat due to weakness and old age. And because this was memorized by all public criers, the woman's body was preserved against corruption and consecrated by spices and myrrh." Bernardino de Bustis, *Rosarium Sermonum predicabilium in quo quicquid praeclarum et utile in cunctis sermonarijs usque in hodiernum editis continetur: hic ingeniose enucleatum atque solerti cura collectum invenies* (Augsburg, 1513), vol. 1, f. CXXI v; http://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/~db/0001/bsb00019395/images/index.html?id=00019395&groesser=&fip=193.174.98.30&no=&seite=298 [accessed 6/24/15].

**67** | The one laconic sentence in the *Dialogus creaturarum moralizatus* about Pero and her father is the only exception.

**68** | "Of the magistrate and the woman: In book 5, Valerius relates that a judge handed over a noble woman, who was condemned to capital punishment, to prison so that she would be killed in secret. The guard of the prison, moved by piety, did not execute her instantly, but allowed her daughter access to her mother, taking care that the married daughter took no food with her so that the mother would die of hunger. Some days later, wondering why the woman was still alive, he discovered the daughter relieving her mother's hunger with the assistance of her milk. This unheard of, admirable, and

spectacular novelty was carried to the judge who obtained the release of the woman." *Die Gesta Romanorum nach der Innsbrucker Handschrift vom Jahre 1342*, ed. by Wilhelm Dick (Erlangen; Leipzig: Deichert, 1890), 74, chapter 126.

**69** | "Valerius tells us that the judge condemns a woman to be beheaded or die in prison. The jailer who has mercy for the woman doesn't want to make her die right away. And when her daughter comes to visit her, he lets it happen, but not without making sure that she does not bring anything to eat so that the mother would die of starvation. Time passes, and he wonders why the woman does not die; he begins to investigate, and finds that the daughter breastfeeds her. When the jailer sees this wondrous spectacle, he recounts it to the judge, and when the judge sees it, he pardons the mother and lets her go free. What is it that piety does not achieve? Who would have ever seen such a miracle that a daughter nurses her mother with her own breasts? Many people would believe that this might be against nature, if nature did not command us to love father and mother." Jacques de Cessoles, *Le Jeu des Eschaz Moralisé (1347),* transl. by Jean Ferron, ed. by Alain Collet (Paris: Champion, 1999), 159.

**70** | Anton Schmid, *Literatur des Schachspiels* (Wien: Carl Gerold, 1847; faksimile ed. Leipzig: Zentralantiquariat der DDR, 1975), 12.

**71** | "On compassion. Perfect compassion has many good effects on us. First, it nourishes. Valerius reports that a certain woman was sentenced to death by the Roman Emperor. But when she was held in prison without any nutrition, two women, who had compassion with her needs, asked the guard whether they could visit the aforementioned miserable woman. The guard was moved by their requests and carefully examined whether they carried any nourishment or food with them. As he saw that they did not carry anything except their very selves, he allowed them to enter in exchange of a vow. Noticing that this woman was of great compassion and good fortune, each of them took out her breasts. With their milk she was nurtured and saved from death. When some days later the judge entered the prison and found the woman unchanged, he asked her from where she took her nourishment. To this, she answered that she always had compassion in her heart and that therefore God had sent her two women who nurtured her with their milk. When hearing of this new manner of practicing compassion, the emperor immediately freed her from death. Spiritually speaking: The woman condemned to death is the soul that committed an offense to God. The prison in which she was enclosed is the condition of sinners in which one is deprived of all benefits and gifts of the church. Noticing this, two women of paradise, namely, Compassion and Charity, give the nutriment of their milk: one gives the milk of the sting of conscience, the other the milk of devotion and compassion. The soul, thus nurtured, receives God's grace and is liberated from the danger of damnation. Secondly, it receives Christ." Jean Gobi, *Scala coeli* (Ulm: Johan Zainer, 1480), 38r-v; http://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/~db/0004/bsb00042665/images/index.html?id=00042665&groesser=&-fip=193.174.98.30&no=&seite=79 [accessed 6/24/15].

**72** | Giovanni Boccaccio, *Famous Women*, ed. and transl. by Virginia Brown (Cambridge, Massachusetts: I Tatti Renaissance Library, 2001), 271.

**73** | Brigitte Buettner, *Boccaccio's Des cleres et nobles femmes: Systems of Signification in an Illuminated Manuscript* (Seattle; London: College Art Association in connection with the University of Washington Press, 1996), figure 64.

**74** | Christine de Pizan, *Book of the City of Ladies*, transl. by Earl Jeff Richards, foreword by Marina Warner (New York: Persea Books, 1983), 115–16, no. II.11.1.

**75** | Renato Raffaelli, "Due incroci per Zelmire," in: Danese et al., *Allattamento filiale,* 125–39.

**76** | Quoted in: R. Raffaelli, "Due incroci per Zelmire," 131–33. See also Carminella Biondi, "La Scena della Carità Romana nella Zelmire di Dormont e Belloy," in: Danese et al., *Allattamento filiale*, 141–54.

**77** | Albrecht von Eyb, *Ehebüchlein. Ob einem Manne sei zu nehmen ein ehelichs Weib oder nicht* (Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1986; reprint of first ed. 1472), 29.

**78** | Mariangela Miotti, "Presenze della carità romana nel teatro francese del Rinascimento," in: Danese et al., *Allattamento filiale*, 65–78.

**79** | "Moralité ou Histoire Rommaine" (Lyon: Barnabé Chaussart, preès Nostre-Dame-de-Confort, 1548), in: *Ancien théâtre françois; ou, Collection des ouvrages dramatiques les plus remarquables depuis les mystères jusqu à Corneille*, vol. III, ed. by M. Emmanuel-Louis-Nicolas Viollet Le Duc, Anatole de Montaiglon, and Pierre Jannet (Paris: P. Jannet, 1854–1857), 171–86, especially 179–80.

**80** | "Oh my child, I suffer bitter pain / Please! Give me relief. / Have pity on seeing me so hungry; / I took such pains in nourishing you." "Moralité ou Histoire Rommaine," 183.

**81** | "Oh, my heart almost faints / when I hear of your cruel pain / So, if you please, without using force / let me return your maternal love / come here to suck from my breast / and be refreshed." "Moralité ou Histoire Rommaine," 183.

**82** | "Moralité ou Histoire Rommaine," 186.

**83** | Johannes Herold, *Exempla virtutum et vitiorum, atque etiam aliarum rerum maxime memorabilium* (Basel: Henricum Petri, 1555).

**84** | Michael Dallapiazza, "Boccaccio, de romana iuvencula in una versione tedesca del sec. XVI e in Hans Sachs," in: Danese et al., *Allattamento filiale*, 55–63.

**85** | Hans Sachs, "Romana, die seugend dochter" (1569) in: *Hans Sachs*, ed. by A. von Keller und E. Goetze (= Bibliothek des literarischen Vereins, vol. 23) (Tübingen: Literarischer Verein, 1895), 470 71, especially 471. http://books.google.com/books?id=iRg3AAAAMAAJ&pg=PA470&lpg=PA470&dq=hans+sachs+romana+dochter&source=bl&ots=FUlok2miXP&sig=GJtjhckvIL8zZRE6KCKAYtq-Qlg&hl=en&sa=X&ei=-QuTMT5PFKePB6AGu3-y1DQ&ved=0CEMQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=hans%20sachs%20romana%20dochter&f=false [accessed 1/10/13].

**86** | "Die edel fraw win muter het / Die sich ain mal vergessen det / Handelt wider römisch gesecz." Sachs, "Romana, die seugend dochter," 470. "Da die dochter sewget mit lüesten / Ir mueter mit milchreichen prüesten." Sachs, "Romana, die seugend dochter," 471.

**87** | *Delle sacre imprese di Monsignor Paolo Aresi vescovo di Tortona libro quarto: In cui le fatte in lode di Cristo Signor N. e di altri Santi e Beati si contengono* (Tortona:

Pietro Giovanni Calenzano et Eliseo Viola compagni, 1630), 379; quoted from Guido Arbizzoni, "La pietas erga parentes negli emblemi," in: Rafaelli et al., *Pietas e allattamento filiale,* 266–67.

**88** | "Wir wollen Töchtern beed / und beede Müttern seyn." *Sibyllen Schwarzin vohn Greiffswald aus Pommern Ander Theil Deutscher Poëtischer Gedichten nuhn zuhm ersten mahl Aus ihren eignen Handschriften heraussgegeben und verleget vohn M. Samuel Berencz aus dem Herzogtuhm Würtemberg*, ed. by Helmut W. Ziefle (Bern; Frankfurt a.M.; Las Vegas: Peter Lang, 1980; first ed. Danzig: Georg Theten Witwen, 1650), vol. 2, no pagination.

**89** | "A temple was dedicated to Piety in Rome in the year 183 B.C., after a daughter had saved the life of her mother, according to legend, who was in prison, condemned to death by starvation, with the milk of her breasts." *Abraham a Sancta Claras Werke: In Auslese*, vol. VI, ed. by Hans Strigl (Vienna: Kirsch, 1907), 88, note 2.

**90** | Giordano Bruno, *Il Candelaio,* ed. by Enrico Sicardi (Milan: Casa Editrice Sonzogno, 1888), 45; http://books.google.com/books?id=kcYuuFaLDSQC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false [accessed 4/10/14].

**91** | Bruno, *Il Candelaio,* 128–29.

**92** | Entry Roma XXIII luglio 1492, in: Giovanni Burcardo, *Diarium sive rerum urbanatum commentarii* (1483–1506), ed. by L. Thuasne (Paris: E. Leroux, 1884), vol. II, quoted in: Giovanni Cipriani, "L'allattamento salvifico: un problema di papi e filosofi," in: Danese et al., *Allattamento filiale*, 103–24, especially 118.

**93** | Unfortunately, Renzo Villa does not give a reference for these spectacles. Renzo Villa, ""Quid hoc est rei?" Persistenze di una fortuna fiamminga," in: Danese et al., *Allattamento filiale*, 79–92.

**94** | Jacob Duym, "Den Spieghel der Liefden," in: *Een Spiegelbock inhudende ses Spiegels, vvaer in veel deuchden claer aen te mercken zijn: Seer cortvvijlich ende stichtelijck voor alle Menschen om te lessen* (Leyden: Ian Bouvvensz; 1600), no pagination.

**95** | Duym, "Den Spieghel der Liefden," no pagination.

**96** | Duym, "Den Spieghel der Liefden," no pagination.

**97** | Duym, "Den Spieghel der Liefden," no pagination.

**98** | Duym, "Den Spieghel der Liefden," no pagination.

**99** | Duym, "Den Spieghel der Liefden," no pagination.

**100** | Giovanni Felice Astolfi, *Scelta curiosa, et ricca officina di varie antiche, & moderne Istorie, divisa in tre libri …* (Venice: apresso gli heredi di Marchiò Sessa 1602), 496.

**101** | I want to thank Monika Schmitter for her kind reference to Venetian inventories. In the house of Pietro Luna, 5 November 1523: "Un teller grando soazado doro cum una dona che da teta a un vechio." Archivio di Stato di Venezia (=ASV), *Cancelleria Inferiore*, Miscellanea notai diversi, busta 34, c. 9. In the house of Benediti de Franciscis, 17 April 1538: "Un quadro grando de nogera con una donna che da latte a un vecchio." ASV, *Cancelleria Inferiore*, Miscellanea notai diversi, busta 36, c. 59. In the house of Gasparo Segizzi, a manuscript illuminator, 15 May 1576: "Un quadro di retrato di una

donna, et suo padre che [?] la glie [?] da il late." ASV, *Cancelleria Inferiore*, Miscellanea notai diversi, busta 42, c. 32. For futher information about the last inventory, see Isabella Palumbo-Fossati, "L'interno della casa dell'artigiano e dell'artista nella Venezia del cinquecento," *Studi Veneziani* 8, Nuova Serie (1984): 109–53.

**102** | Auction catalogue, Vienna, Dorotheum, 328. Kunstauktion, April 8, 1922, 53, no. 82.

**103** | Agrippa d'Aubigné, *Les Tragiques*, ed. by Jean-Raymond Fanlo, vol. 1 (Paris: H. Champion, 2003; first ed. 1603), 239.

**104** | Secondo Lancelotti, *Les impostures de l'histoire ancienne et profane; ouvrage nécessaire aux jeunes gens, aux instituteurs, & généralement à toutes les personnes qui* ... (Paris: J.P. Costard 1770; first Italian ed. *Farfalloni degli antichi istorici*, Venice 1647), vol. 2, 36–38, note a.

**105** | Secondo Lancelotti, *Les impostures de l'histoire ancienne*, 40–41.

**106** | "Op een slaapende Harderin, die van Chimon gezien wordt; in de groote zaal van Abraham van Bassen: door Bakker geschildert:
Van Bassen hou toch standt; de Nimf die gy ziet slaapen,
Is niet door 't groot penseel, maar door Natuur geschaapen.
Laat Chimon toch bezien, wie hem de borst doet braân.
Men kan de lust, bywijl, door d'oogen ook verzaân;
Dies zijt een weinig stil: hier moet geen voetzool kraken.
Gy zult, zoo gy u rept, de veldtnimf wakker maaken.
Zy brandt ons nu zy slaapt; indien zy wakker wardt,
Zoo maakts' ons heel tot asch: want 't oog ontsteckt het hart." Jan Vos, "Byschriften op Schildereyen," in: *Alle de Gedichten,* verzamelt en uitgegeven door J.L. (Amsterdam: Jacob Lescaille, Boeckverkooper op de Midddeldam, naast de Vismarkt, 1662), vol. 1, 521–76, especially 541.

**107** | Arthur Murphy, "The Grecian Daughter," in: *Cumberland's British Theater* (London: John Cumberland, 1830), vol. 25, no consecutive pagination. Roberta Mullini, "Behold the pious fraud of charity and love" ovvero narrare il non rappresentabile in the Grecian Daughter di Arthur Murphy," in: Danese et al., *Allattamento filiale,* 155–72.

**108** | I am indebted to my colleague Ellen Donkin for this observation.

**109** | Murphy, "The Grecian Daughter," 22.

**110** | Giovanni Cipriani, "L'allattamento salvifico: un problema di papi e filosofi," in: Danese et al., *Allattamento filiale*, 103–24.

**111** | When King David was very old, he could not keep warm even when they put covers over him. So his attendants said to him, "Let us look for a young virgin to serve the king and take care of him. She can lie beside him so that our lord the king may keep warm. Then they searched throughout Israel for a beautiful young woman and found Abishag, a Shunammite, and brought her to the king. The woman was very beautiful; she took care of the king and waited on him, but the king had no sexual relations with her." The Bible, Kings 1.1; http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Kings+1&version=NIV; [accessed 1/14/13].

**112** | Giovan Battista (Giambattista) Casti, "Novella Terza: Le due Sunamitidi," in: *Opere di Giambattista Casti in un volume* (Bruxelles: Società Meline, Cans e Compagni, 1838; first complete ed. 1804), part 2, 13–18, especially 14.

**113** | Casti, "Novella Terza: Le due Sunamitidi," 14.

**114** | Casti, "Novella Terza: Le due Sunamitidi," 15.

**115** | Casti, "Novella Terza: Le due Sunamitidi," 18.