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Reproducing Poussin

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Résumé de l'article

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Reproducing Poussin

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Résumé

Pourquoi si peu d'historiennes d'art ont-elles analysé les oeuvres du Poussin? Nous tenterons de répondre à cette question en considérant comment les articulations de la sexualisation ont informé et continuent d'informer la construction des discours sur Poussin. Après avoir analysé quelques récits en histoire de l'art sur le développement artistique du Poussin, nous examinerons un dessin de l'artiste, *Scène domestique dans un intérieur*, exécuté autour de 1643-45. En comparant ce dessin avec des illustrations et des descriptions prémodernes de l'accouchement, nous posons l'hypothèse que Poussin représente une scène d'accouchement. Nous essayerons de montrer que les débats entourant les pratiques prémodernes d'accouchement jettent un nouvel éclairage sur les tensions et les contradictions de ce dessin. Nous conclurons en soutenant que cette oeuvre n'a jamais été considérée auparavant comme une représentation d'accouchement parce que Poussin est communément compris comme un artiste productif et jamais comme un artiste paternel reproductif. Comme le «cadre structurant» du «Parergon» de Jacques Derrida, la sexualisation est, elle aussi, à la fois exclue et pourtant essentielle aux approches actuelles sur Poussin.

Introduction

A spectacular retrospective of the work of Nicolas Poussin was installed at the Grand Palais in Paris from 1 October 1994 until 2 January 1995. Commemorating the four-hundredth anniversary of the artist's birth in Normandy near Les Andelys, the show included 110 paintings and 135 drawings by Poussin. Pierre Rosenberg, who curated the exhibition along with Louis-Antoine Prat, hoped that a larger public would verify that the artist was indeed the greatest French painter and not simply enshrined by the laboured theorizing of art historians.[1] This ambition to strengthen Poussin's reputation marked the retrospective as a renewal of the 1960 Poussin exhibition at the Louvre, which launched what Walter Friedländer would later call a "Poussin renaissance" in scholarship.[2] The extensive use of natural lighting at the Grand Palais also recalled the earlier show, in which the same lighting technique was used. At the more recent installation, the natural light also seemed designed to demonstrate that Poussin's work was merely presented to the spectator, without the "artificial" intervention of art historians.

Several reviewers of the recent exhibition, however, found the natural lighting more annoying than nostalgic or revealing.[3] Many of Poussin's paintings were illuminated unevenly, and it was difficult to get overall, frontal views of the images. Spectators instead obtained a number of different views while manoeuvring around the paintings. In direct contrast to the stated goal of a direct experience of Poussin, the conspicuous lighting indicated that a specific reframing of the artist was occurring at the Grand Palais. The liminal views could also be read as metaphors for the ways in which spectators and scholars take up decentred positions in their interpretations of Poussin. Parts of the installation, therefore, revealed "Poussin" as a shifting discursive construction.

The various methodological approaches to Poussin are, in fact, celebrated in the massive catalogue that Rosenberg and Prat prepared to accompany the exhibition. The introductory chapter by Rosenberg, for example, provides an overview of what he calls the "progress" of the "diverse research on Poussin" since 1960.[4] The fourteen subsequent articles would seem to confirm Rosenberg's claims.[5] Other recent assessments of Poussin literature have been less enthusiastic. Elizabeth Cropper and Charles Dempsey contend that, despite some progress, "it is not altogether clear to us that Poussin studies have in fact taken directions substantially different from those that were already emerging in the 1960s." The authors go on to call for a "genuinely historical criticism."[6]

I would agree with Cropper and Dempsey that Poussin scholarship has been limited. However, as a feminist art historian, what strikes me most is that, "alternative" readings notwithstanding, very few feminist gazes have ever been turned upon the work of Poussin. This lack of feminist intervention noticeably contrasts with the lively feminist scholarship undertaken in related fields, especially early-modern French literature, by Erica Harth, Joan DeJean, Elizabeth C. Goldsmith, Donna Goodman and others.[7] Despite continuing debates about the dating, chronology, authenticity and meaning of Poussin's images, there seems to be an unstated agreement that feminist approaches to Poussin are irrelevant. Given the veritable explosion of Poussin studies and exhibitions in the last forty years or so, the lack of feminist intervention is puzzling. After all, feminist readings of other major art-historical figures and periods are increasingly common (even though feminist theory continues to be marginalized in many art history depart-

Figure 1. Nicolas Poussin, *Domestic Scene in the Interior of a Room*, 1643-45. Pen, brown ink and brown wash on paper, 14.8 x 29.1 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des arts graphiques (Photo: Réunion des Musées Nationaux).

ments). I therefore contend that part of the current reassessment of Poussin and Poussin scholarship should include the question: How have articulations of gender informed and how do they continue to inform constructions of Poussin?

Considerations of gender and the representation of women are not entirely absent from writing on Poussin. The depiction of sexuality and desire in Poussin's early erotic works, for example, is discussed by Richard Wollheim.[8] In his evaluation of art writing on Poussin, David Carrier examines Poussin's overdetermined status as a "French," "classical" and "intellectual" artist. Carrier claims that "unlike their colleagues who study Courbet and Manet, Poussin scholars say little about sexism."[9] The author then goes on to say little about the subject himself. More recently, however, Svetlana Alpers has addressed historical conceptions of Poussin in relation to gender. She argues that a system of distinctions, in which Rubens' style was considered "feminine" and Poussin's "masculine," was elaborated in eighteenth-century art theory.[10]

I will likewise foreground the role of gender in art-historical constructions of Poussin, although I must immediately stress the necessarily partial nature of my study. I will begin by discussing some of the burgeoning literature about Poussin, but in order to avoid simplifying the multiple accounts of Poussin, I will focus on the institutionalized representation of the artist at the Grand Palais. After all, my research on Poussin was inspired by this exhibition. It was there that I first searched for, and eventually found, a woman-centred position from which to re-view the artist.

This position will be articulated in relation to one drawing, which I will associate with the theme of reproduction. Entitled *Domestic Scene in the Interior of a Room* (fig. 1), the pen and ink sketch, 14.8 x 29.1 cm., was made around 1643-45. It was installed along with other drawings of about the same date in the chronologically arranged exhibition at the Grand Palais.[11] By examining in detail only one image, I self-consciously proceed from a specific and marginal position. Since Poussin is now commonly understood as the founder of the French painting tradition, I also avoid making overall statements that could reinforce his monolithic status within art-historical narratives. Although the drawing is considered a "minor" work by Poussin, and one which has hardly merited extended commentary, I emphasize it precisely because it does not conform to the usual understandings of the artist. The drawing, which I claim includes the depiction of a woman recovering from childbirth, also provides a case study from which to argue that articulations of gender are both excluded from and essential to current approaches to Poussin.

Poussin and the Rejection of "Femininity"

One standard account of Poussin's artistic development is that, as a relatively young and unformed artist, he was attracted to the seductive "Baroque" style. However, as he

"matured," the artist rejected the "superficial" pleasures of visual immediacy to produce increasingly intellectual paintings. In the 1967 monograph that is still considered the starting point for all contemporary studies of Poussin, Anthony Blunt argues that: "The sole aim of some painters is to please the eye, but for this, only skillful imitation and brilliance of technique are required, qualities for which Poussin had the utmost contempt."[12] More recently, noted Poussin scholar Alain Mérot contends that "control and restraint" became keynotes of Poussin's work in a reaction to the "ornate excesses of the Baroque" while, according to Howard Hibbard, the artist "subordinate[d] coloristic handling and sensibility to intellectual and moral purposes ... in his mature style."[13]

Ornament and "superficial" decoration are often historically linked with "femininity." In her discussion of the well-known seventeenth-century academic battle between the partisans of drawing and those of colour, Jacqueline Lichtenstein demonstrates that, when painted ornament was thought to be too pronounced, it was associated with the make-up of an indiscreet woman.[14] A clear example of this gendered theory is found in the short treatise published in 1662 by Roland Fréart de Chambray, an honorary member of the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture. In his *Idée de la perfection de la peinture*, which Poussin read and responded to favourably, Chambray criticizes connoisseurs who position themselves close to a painting to take pleasure in the artifice of its surface. The author implies that these spectators establish a bodily relationship with what he goes on to call a coquettish mistress "who asks only for make up and colours in order to appeal at the first encounter, without worrying if she will please for long."[15]

Alpers has shown that this academic distinction between "masculine" cerebral contemplation and "feminine" visual deception was rearticulated in subsequent understandings of Poussin.[16] Indeed, the dichotomy continues to inform twentieth-century Poussin scholarship. Blunt, for example, contrasts "the warmth" of Rubens with "the severe and intellectual concentration" of Poussin's finest works.[17] Despite pleas for appreciating Poussin "as a painter,"[18] it is almost too obvious to point to the continuing association of Poussin's works with cerebral effort. In his 1985 study of Poussin, for example, Christopher Wright claims that "it was Poussin's vowed intention to make the spectator think and feel, even at the expense of denying him [sic] visual pleasure."[19]

Cultivating an appreciation for Poussin is even characterized by some scholars as a kind of art-historical coming of age. Mérot describes surpassing his youthful preference for the thrilling paintings of Caravaggio and Rembrandt to achieve an understanding of the less accessible work of Poussin.[20] Wright comments that undergraduates commonly find Poussin "boring" because the artist "forces his erudition on us."[21] Just as Poussin overcame the sensuousness of his youth (and his early excesses notably included both a "Baroque" style and a likely bout with venereal disease), so too the contemporary viewer must graduate to the more intellectually demanding works of Poussin.

This account of the production of an "authentic" art historical position adheres to the distinction between "lowly" sensory experiences and "genuine" aesthetic reflections on objects, as formulated by Immanuel Kant in his *The Critique of Aesthetic Judgment* (1790). Michelle Hirschhorn argues that Kant's hegemonic celebration of "mind over matter" is historically gendered, intellectual activity having been, for the most part, attributed to men.[22] To expand the frame of reference, learning to admire Poussin also sounds curiously like an Oedipal narrative. Instead of a (male) child who desires the mother and identifies with/wants to replace the father, the spectator develops by overcoming immediate visual pleasures, to model himself [sic] after the authoritative and didactic Poussin.[23] The move from visual and bodily sensations toward the work of Poussin, which is often considered to have close affinities with written language, also recalls the Lacanian explanation of the child who abandons the sensuous pre-Oedipal stage in order to enter the patriarchal symbolic order.[24]

If appreciating Poussin can be a sign of both art-historical maturity ("manliness"?) and linguistic achievement, it is not surprising that numerous studies, especially dissertations, continue to be written about the artist.[25] At the same time, it is conceivable that the construction of Poussin as a moralizing father figure who triumphs by rejecting "feminine" artifice has not appealed to many feminist viewers.

Although accounts of Poussin's development vary,[26] there were echoes of this "masculine" version of the artist at the Grand Palais. Rosenberg argued, for example, that a primary goal of the exhibition was to encourage the spectator to take the necessary time and effort required to understand the poetry of Poussin's paintings. This public education was to be accomplished with the extensive textual exegesis that accompanied almost every work at the Grand Palais.[27] The texts were primarily concerned with identifying the subject matter, literary sources and precise dates of the images. They thereby reinforced arguments that Poussin's work should be approached through language and provided evidence that the "mere" visual experience of Poussin was ultimately considered inadequate by the curators.

Statements about art making attributed to Poussin were stencilled on the walls throughout the exhibition at the

Figure 2. Nicolas Poussin, Self-Portrait, 1649. Oil on canvas, 78 x 65 cm. Berlin, Staatliche Museen (Photo: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin).

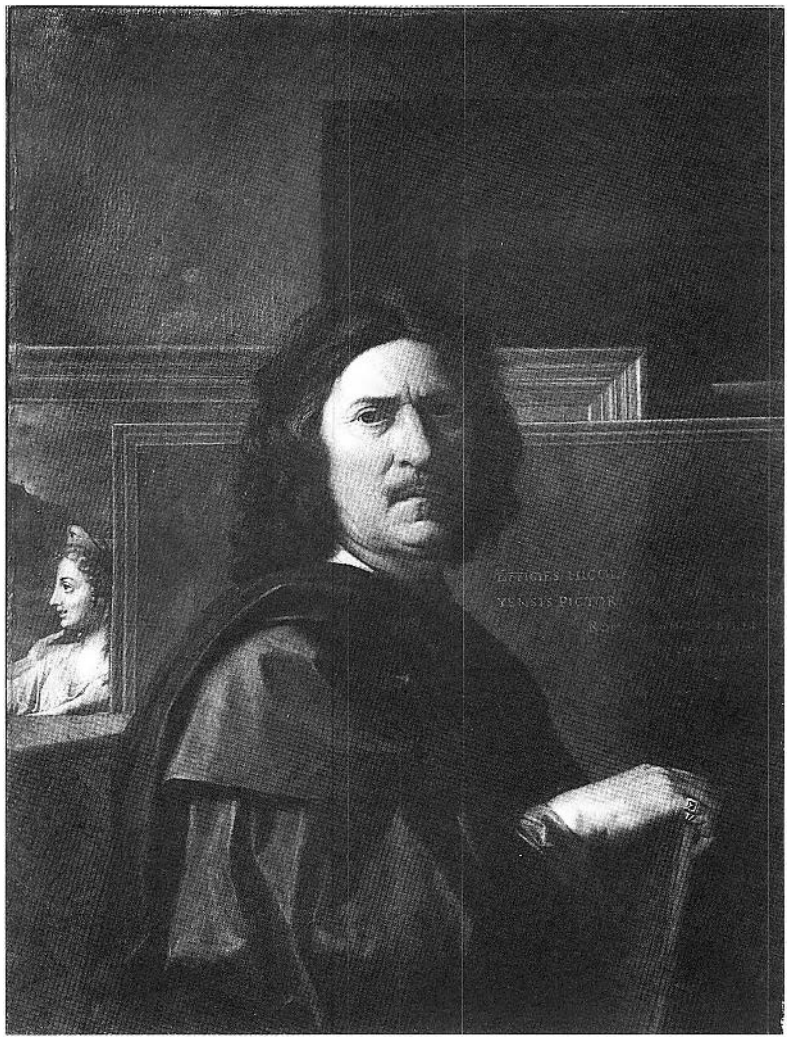
Grand Palais. They were meant to represent the artist as a theorist, even though his writings indicate a second- or third-hand knowledge of a variety of sources, as Cropper has shown.[28] In addition, the label that accompanied two self-portraits, one painted for his patron Pointel in 1649 (fig. 2) and the other for Fréart de Chantelou in 1649-50 (fig. 3), stated that "they represent, in some way, the equivalent of the treatise on painting that Poussin never wrote." In both images, Poussin portrays himself holding a bound book, which likely refers to his intention to record his version of the principles of painting. By claiming that the self-portraits by Poussin potentially substitute for the text which was never written, both the status of Poussin as a formulator of artistic theory and the understanding of his paintings as elevated literary statements were reconfirmed.

The representation of Poussin as an intellectual artist was also strengthened by the large number of drawings in the exhibition at the Grand Palais. This insistence on Poussin as a draughtsman evoked constructions of him as a "classical" artist who focused on line as opposed to colour.[29] Although Poussin undertook many studies of landscape, almost all of the drawings installed in the Grand Palais featured human figures. Most of the drawings also portrayed scenes based on passages from antique literature or the Bible. This selection argued for a Poussin who primarily made images that would be considered "historical" according to the hierarchy of genres ostensibly supported by the members of the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture during the seventeenth century.[30] Norman Bryson argues that the "lower" genres, which included still lifes and landscapes considered "closer to nature," were associated with "femininity" in this early-modern theory.[31] At the Grand Palais, images which did not portray elevated or "cerebral" subject matter were either excluded from the exhibition, or marginalized within it, as described below.

The most obviously gendered construction of Poussin was the representation of him as a paternal source of knowledge. Parts of the large exposition at the Grand Palais were installed at the Royal Academy of Arts in London (from 19 January until 9 April 1995) under the title *Poussin: The Father of French Art.* This claim, already made by Philippe de Chennevières as early as 1894,[32] positioned Poussin as the founder of the French artistic tradition and reiterated his central role in narratives of French art. While Poussin was being featured at the Grand Palais and the Royal Academy of Arts, however, the areas newly devoted to him in the Louvre were emptied of his works. An alternative show at the Louvre, called *Autour de Poussin,* was therefore designed to coincide with the larger Poussin exhibitions. Copies after works by Poussin, images possibly by Poussin and representations by what were called the "French followers" of the artist, including Jacques Stella and Charles Le Brun, were displayed. This installation stressed Poussin's paternal role as the source of inspiration for other artists. It also implied that, even during the artist's temporary removal from the French museum (and by extension his absence from France, since Poussin spent most of his career in Rome), his influence in France remained palpable.

The Poussin retrospective at the Grand Palais furnished evidence that gender continues to inform constructions of Poussin and that it remains unexamined. The way to challenge these gendered inflections of Poussin is not, however, to privilege colour and visual pleasure as triumphantly

Figure 3. Nicolas Poussin, *Self-Portrait*, 1649-50. Oil on canvas, 98 x 74 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre (Photo: Réunion des Musées Nationaux).



to privilege colour and visual pleasure as triumphantly "feminine" aspects of the artist's work. Such a strategy would simply keep binary distinctions in place. Instead, a feminist reading begins with what Griselda Pollock calls "a political commitment to women."[33] My feminist revision of Poussin will therefore move from reading for inscriptions of gender in Poussin scholarship to an examination of historical representations of the "feminine" in his work.

Recovering Women

My response to the framing of Poussin at the Grand Palais is to reframe one drawing (fig. 1) by reading it "for the woman."[34] The image features women, after all, with a centrally seated female figure shown pointing at two rambunctious children, another woman reclining in the background, and four additional female figures (two are standing and two are seated) occupying the right side of the representation. The title selected by Rosenberg and Prat, *Domestic Scene in the Interior of a Room*, implied that the drawing portrayed a generic household scene. I was immediately struck, however, by the formal and iconographic similarities between the sketch and early-modern written and visual descriptions of childbirth. Many early-modern European obstetrical treatises, for example, describe the all-female realm of the enclosed lying-in room, in which the midwife and other attendants administer to the newly delivered woman.[35] In his study of the "great and constant iconography" of childbirth from 1550 to 1700, Pierre Bertrand argues that images of birth tend to include: the newly delivered woman reclining on a bed; a midwife, often distinguished in some way from the other characters; an infant, habitually shown being bathed or swaddled; and several birth attendants, some of whom are depicted serving food, while others warm linens by the fire in preparation for receiving the child.[36] Several of these elements, including the reclining figure, the swaddled infant and the attendants, are present in the drawing by Poussin.

Poussin's image can usefully be compared with other early-modern scenes of lying-in, including one from an obstetrical treatise by the Swiss surgeon Jakob Rueff, entitled *De conceptu et generatione hominis* (On the Conception and Generation of Mankind), 1554 (fig. 4).[37] In the engraving made for Rueff's book, a woman rests on a bed in the back left corner of the scene, while an attendant offers her some kind of nourishment. In the foreground, a seated female figure is about to lower a baby into a tub of water. She is observed by a young girl positioned beside an empty cradle on the right-hand side of the image. The witness seems to be learning about her future participation in such reproductive rituals. This didactic theme is in keeping with one of the goals of such obstetrical treatises, which was to teach women and the male surgeons who were sometimes called to intervene in difficult labours the methods of caring for women before, during and after childbirth.[38]

As in Rueff's engraving, one of the attendants at the foot of the bed in Poussin's image holds a tray in her outstretched hands, as if she is about to offer sustenance to the reclining woman. The other birth attendants, shown chatting in the sixteenth-century scene, rest after what may have been a long and difficult labour in the drawing by Poussin. Such indications of fatigue are also found in a colour etch-

Figure 4. Illustration from Jakob Rueff, *De conceptu et generatione hominis*, 1554, Zurich (Photo: The National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, MD).

ing of the birthing chamber, made after Federigo Barocci, in which the seated midwife mops her brow (fig. 5).[39] In Poussin's drawing, the infant has already been placed in its cradle. This child is attended by what may be the midwife. The seated figure is read as such more from visual evidence than iconographic precedent. She is shown as a centrally important and authoritative figure who attempts to maintain control of the lying-in room. This representation may invoke the midwife's role, which was to oversee the labour and subsequent recovery of the parturient woman. At the same time, the seated woman could be another important nurse or caretaker.

The young female witness in Rueff's engraving has been replaced with two possibly male children in the drawing by Poussin. Although the nude child who faces the viewer is clearly male, the other figure is more difficult to identify. The partially unclothed child, however, resembles a conventionally male *putto* figure. The open mouths of these children signify the screaming that has both disturbed the newly delivered woman, shown rising to regard the commotion, and evoked the ire of the centrally seated woman. This upheaval is echoed in the overflowing vase of water in the foreground, which has perhaps been overturned by the battling children. In any case, containers of water are common in early-modern scenes of lying-in chambers, although usually related to the bath of the newborn. In Philippe de Champaigne's *Birth of the Virgin* of 1636, for example, a round tub is shown next to a vase in the immediate foreground of the painting (fig. 6).

Both Champaigne's work and the etching after Barocci represent a religious theme, namely the birth of the Virgin. Although the two images depict early-modern lying-in practices, the divine significance of the births is clearly indicated. Hovering angels are featured in the Italian engraving, while the halo of the newborn, prominent clouds and floating *putti* in the painting by Champaigne unmistakably mark its sacred content. Other than in medical treatises and some popular tracts (discussed below), early-modern representations of lying-in were usually related to the birth of religious or prominent historical figures, such as Louis XIV.[40] Poussin's drawing, however, includes neither halos nor angels. Despite its identification as a birth of the Virgin in the seventeenth-century inventory of Everard Jabach,[41] it is no longer understood to include a religious theme.

In fact, art historians have found the subject matter of the small drawing by Poussin quite mysterious. The caption in the *catalogue raisonné* of Poussin drawings by Friedländer and Blunt, for example, claims that the "[domestic scene] no doubt has a precise theme, but it has not been possible to identify it."[42] To account for the battling children, Jacques Thuillier postulates that the drawing represents a familial anecdote about a broken jug and two undressed children threatened with switches.[43] Perhaps his reading was not accepted because an "anecdote" neither provides a particularly authoritative literary source, nor explains the other figures in the drawing. In their recent catalogue on the drawings of Poussin, Rosenberg and Prat note that the woman on the left is likely an *accouchée* (a woman recovering from childbirth). They conclude: "we still do not know what is the true subject, whose literary source is doubtless to be found in Antiquity."[44]

Such a classical or mythological precedent remains obscure. In contrast, Poussin's other depictions of birth have clear classical references. The painted *Birth of Bacchus*, made in 1657, for example, includes figures easily identified as

Figure 5. After Federigo Barocci, *The Birth of the Virgin*. Colour etching, 37.5 x 23.7 cm. London, Wellcome Institute Library (Photo: The Wellcome Institute Library).

Mercury, Pan and so forth.[45] Poussin's drawing of childbirth does not include any obvious mythological signifiers. At the same time, it is not impossible that a literary reference inspired the image. Despite my argument that the drawing represents early-modern birthing practices, it is not my goal to pinpoint its precise subject or sources. Instead, I propose to read the image for its articulation of maternity, an approach not previously undertaken. This interpretation does not exclude other potential readings; it is a strategic one, informed by my current research interests in early-modern representations of childbirth.

I will begin to move beyond an iconographical interpretation by emphasizing precisely those aspects of the drawing that deviate from standard scenes of birth, namely the container in the foreground and the squabbling children. Although the vase could refer to the bath of the newborn, it is overturned and its liquid contents threaten to move into the space of the viewer. Other drawings and paintings by Poussin also feature images of overflowing vases, usually in relation to allegorical representations of rivers or outdoor bathing scenes. It is not possible, let alone advisable, to assign one meaning to this recurrent motif, but these containers are often set within a landscape and thus would seem, on the most obvious level, to be associated with abundance or nature.[46] Similar references to fecundity would not be out of place within a representation of birth. The vase could thus be related to a celebration of fertility, a reading amplified by the presence of several children.[47]

The prominence of such a container in a scene of birth can, however, be understood within another tradition. Based on the conflation of women with their uteri, women's bodies have been compared to vases or other enclosing forms. A primary example is provided by Aristotle, who describes women as passive containers that simply receive active male sperm in reproduction.[48] The association of procreative women with containers remained common during the seventeenth century, particularly in obstetrical treatises, where the maternal womb was sometimes described as a prison for the fetus.[49] The plates in early-modern European obstetrical treatises often feature representations of the womb, which has been detached from the rest of the maternal body, as an enclosure in which the fetus floats. Images in the treatise from 1694 by the French surgeon Philippe Peu, entitled *La pratique des accouchemens* (The Practice of Childbirth), for example, show isolated vase-shaped wombs that have been dissected so that the fetuses, shown helplessly tangled in impossibly long umbilical cords, can be revealed to the gaze (fig. 7).

Elizabeth Cropper argues that in his painting of *Rebecca and Eliezar at the Well* of 1648 (fig. 8), Poussin draws on the sixteenth-century Italian writer Firenzuola's analogy between the shape of a beautiful woman and that of an antique vase.[50] In his drawing of childbirth, however, the emphasis is not on the aesthetic beauty of women. The vase, which metonymically replaces the maternal womb, is more like a figuration of childbirth. With boundaries that overflow, it represents birth as messy and potentially out of control, in contrast to the idea of a straightforward celebration of fertility.

The overturned vase is additionally associated with disruption because, as noted earlier, it is close to the fighting children. Although not mentioned in early-modern written descriptions of birth, older children are sometimes depicted in images of the lying-in room. In addition to the young girl in the engraving for Rueff's treatise, two children are included to the left of the women who surround the bed of the new mother in Abraham Bosse's engraving, *The Visit to the Newly Delivered Woman*, ca. 1633 (fig. 9). The little girls (although the plumed hat of the figure on

Figure 6. Philippe de Champaigne, *The Birth of the Virgin*, 1636. Oil on canvas, 435 x 430 cm. Arras, Musée d'Arras (Photo: Réunion des Musées Nationaux).

the right may infer that the child is male, the bulky dress indicates otherwise) appear to mimic the conversation of the women. The battling children in Poussin's drawing are hardly such peaceful participants. Perhaps they vie for the temporarily lost attention of their mother as she recovers from childbirth.

The seated woman directs our attention to the rivals as she leans forward, holding a switch ready at her side. It is as if she were about to leap out of her chair to punish or control the children. Although it is unclear if the children are in any real danger, the scene of birth was installed with representations of murderous women at the Grand Palais. To the left of the drawing, for example, two images portrayed Medea exacting revenge for the infidelities of her husband, Jason, by killing their children (figs. 10 and 11). In each representation the body of one child lies lifeless on the ground before Medea, while she holds an infant by a single foot and raises her sword to slay it. The proximity of these violent images encouraged the viewer to interpret the strong female character in the drawing of childbirth as a menace to the young children.

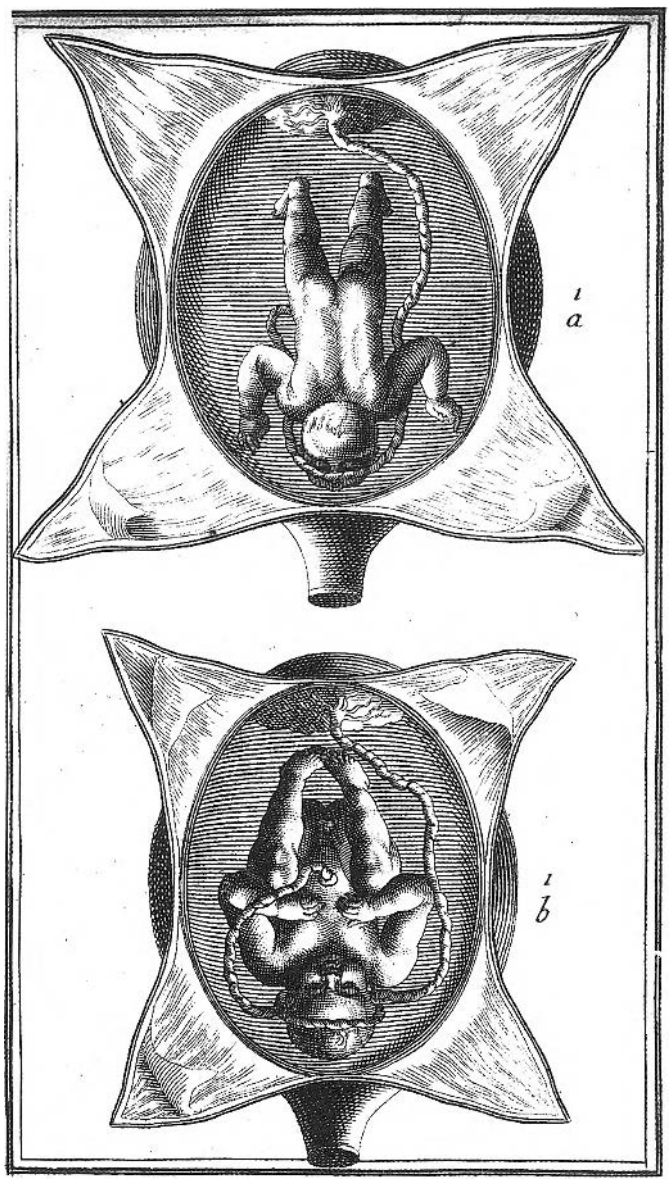
Above and to the right of Poussin's drawing was a representation of Salomé receiving the head of John the Baptist as a reward for her dancing. Below that, an image drawn after an antique model combines a representation of Phaedra, seated on the left and accompanied by Eros, with a depiction of Pegasus. Like the story of Medea, Phaedra's tale is recounted in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*:[51] she was the wife of Theseus, who loved her stepson Hippolytus (not represented in this case), and after being repulsed by him, accused him to his father and so brought Hippolytus to his death. Poussin's drawing of childbirth was thus both associated with scenes of dangerous women and subsumed within illustrations of elevated literary texts at the Grand Palais.

My reading of Poussin's drawing of childbirth so far has emphasized its ambiguous messages. Childbirth is both potentially celebrated and shown as disruptive, while the authoritative female figure is portrayed simultaneously restoring order and as a possible threat to the children. Instead of resolving these apparent contradictions, I want to elaborate upon them by positioning Poussin's scene of birth in relation to early-modern birthing rituals and the debates that surrounded them. I will thus perform what Mieke Bal calls an interdiscursive reading which "takes the [representation] as an intervention in, and response to, social discourses that were relevant at [the] time, and are still, or again, or differently, relevant in our time."[52]

The celebration of birth was traditionally a female affair, with lying-in ceremonies lasting anywhere from three days to three weeks. The female neighbours, friends and family of the newly delivered woman would gather around her bed to eat, drink wine and engage in conversation.[53] This ritual, represented directly in the engraving by Bosse, is merely alluded to in the image for Rueff's treatise by a table set with food and located in front of the bed. Women are shown serving from a similar table at the foot of the bed in Poussin's drawing.

The activities that followed childbirth received their share of social criticism, particularly within the popular tracts known as *Les caquets de l'accouchée* (The Cackle of the Confined Woman), which were republished many times

Figure 7. Philippe Peu, *La pratique des accouchemens* (Paris, 1694). Engraving (Photo: Edward G. Miner Library, University of Rochester Medical Center, New York).



from the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries in France. In these stories, the male narrator, often the husband of the recently delivered woman, criticizes the "gossiping" women who eat and drink him out of house and home.[54] Sometimes the male author is portrayed eavesdropping on a group of women at a lying-in celebration. Domna Stanton argues that this figure, who ridicules the speech of the opinionated women, symbolically avenges the excluded male at these gatherings.[55] One viewing position for the drawing by Poussin may likewise be that of a judgmental voyeur. At the same time, it is interesting to note the parallel between the male children (or at least one male child) who demand acknowledgement at the female ritual and the figure who seeks retaliation in *Les caquets*.

There was also a wider critique of women's birth practices in early-modern Europe. Diatribes against midwives included that of Gervais de la Touche, a "gentleman from Poitou," published in 1587. Although the layperson denounces the use of all birthing assistants, his most vitriolic attacks were reserved for what he called the perverse ignorance of midwives, who daily killed women and infants in childbirth.[56] More typical were the negative assessments of traditional birthing practices and midwives featured in the increasingly numerous obstetrical treatises, written primarily by male surgeons in early-modern Europe. Even though Eucharius Rösslin never attended a single birth, his vastly popular *Der swangern Frawen und hebammen Rosegarten* (The Rose Garden for Pregnant Women and Midwives) of 1513 was a landmark for male encroachment into the lucrative practice of childbirth. Rösslin asserted that "midwives through neglect and ignorance destroy children far and wide."[57] During the seventeenth century, French male surgeons also complained that female midwives were "ignorant." Their main targets, however, were those "presumptuous" women who attempted to manage difficult labours by themselves. If problems occurred during delivery, male surgeons demanded a prompt and unquestioning deference to their surgical authority both from the midwife and the other attendants of the parturient woman.[58] As in the fashionable *Les caquets de l'accouchée*, opinionated women who refused to acknowledge male authority in the lying-in room were subject to criticism in many early-modern obstetrical treatises.

Despite the increasing regulation and male supervision of female midwives in early-modern Europe,[59] for the most part female midwives retained control of childbirth well into the eighteenth century. The continuing power of female midwives was evident when the best known male "midwife" of the seventeenth century, the French surgeon François Mauriceau, accused his female rivals of giving male practitioners a bad reputation by comparing them to butchers.[60] The easy association of surgeons with carvers of flesh was exacerbated because male surgeons were most often called to remove dead fetuses with their sharp instruments when delivery by other means proved impossible.

Another example of female resistance to male intervention in childbirth is provided by Louise Bourgeois, the royal midwife to Queen Marie de' Medici from 1601 to 1609 and the first French woman to write obstetrical treatises. Throughout her manuals, Bourgeois defended her status as an educated and skilled midwife.[61] At the same time, she agreed that female midwives should receive more theoretical training and requested that they be permitted to attend anatomical demonstrations.[62] Although she was

Figure 8. Nicolas Poussin, Rebecca and Eliezar at the Well, 1648. Oil on canvas, 118 x 197 cm. Paris, Musée du Louvre (Photo: Réunion des Musées Nationaux).

cal establishment. Her best-known contest with the royal surgeon Charles Guillemeau concerned the cause of the death in childbed of her patient, Marie de Bourbon-Montpensier, sister-in-law to Louis XIII, in 1627.[63] The publicity surrounding the case effectively ended the illustrious career of the midwife.

Women's authority in the lying-in room, long considered "natural" because of their first-hand experience of childbirth, began to be questioned in early-modern Europe. Although male surgeons were eager to increase their obstetrical practice, they met with resistance from midwives, parturient women and the families of those women.[64] I suggest that this specific historical context offers a way to review Poussin's drawing of childbirth. I am not advocating a kind of "reflection theory" in which social "reality" is found translated into visual form. Instead, I contend that the early-modern discourse of childbirth can shed new light on the drawing. Poussin's scene of birth can be viewed as a complex argument about, among other things, tension in the lying-in chamber. Although the centrally seated woman remains in charge of the lying-in room, the rambunctious (male) children disrupt the newly delivered woman. The liquid pouring from the overturned vase signifies both fecundity and the disorder of childbirth. Indeed, the drawing is full of contrasts. Even as chaos erupts on the left-hand side of the image, and the "overbearing" woman may be about to punish the children, the women who rest on the right side of the scene provide a vision of calm stability. Although Poussin's paintings are often considered to have discernible didactic meanings, there is no straightforward moral lesson represented in this case. The uncertainties and mixed messages of the drawing cannot be resolved. They can, however, be understood in relation to the ongoing struggle for obstetrical authority and the government of the lying-in room in early-modern Europe.

Conclusions: Poussin's Paternity

Why has this small drawing by Poussin not previously been analysed as a scene of birth, even when the reclining woman was identified as an *accouchée*?[65] One answer is that the association of Poussin with reproduction undermines his status as a rational painter-philosopher. "Lowly" medical and popular treatises concerning childbirth and its aftermath hardly resemble the elevated literary texts that supposedly preoccupied Poussin. The study of Poussin's *Birth of Bacchus*, 1657, by Margaretha Rossholm Lagerlöf is unusual because it includes an examination of the painting in relation to Aristotle's theory of reproduction, while considering the gendered implications of attributing the active role in birth

Figure 9. Abraham Bosse, The Visit to the Newly Delivered Woman, ca. 1633. Engraving, 25 x 33 cm. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Photo: Bibliothèque Nationale de France).

to the male god Jupiter.[66] For the most part, however, Poussin's work and even his mythological scenes of birth have not been related to issues of maternity.

Reproductive metaphors, nevertheless, directly inform current approaches to Poussin. He is often understood as a paternal disseminator of knowledge, with other artists positioned as his "progeny" as noted above. But he has also been described as a productive artist who was never reproductive. Rosenberg claims, for example, that every one of Poussin's images is different, and thus worthy of individual attention, because the artist "never repeats."[67] Despite constructions of Poussin as a fertile origin, his role as an artistic "father" is generally opposed to "feminine" reproductivity.

At the same time, some biographical interpretations of Poussin's later choices of subject matter do accord the artist an interest in reproduction. Richard Verdi, for example, argues that the numerous scenes by Poussin which feature the birth of a hero and representations of children can be related to the painter's venereal infection and childless marriage. Verdi echoes Hibbard's claim that "it is not beyond possibility that Poussin's many family groups of the 1640s and 1650s are, among other things, a sublimation of his own frustrated fatherhood."[68] These accounts invoke a kind of male maternity to explain Poussin's artistic creativity.

Despite the apparent association of Poussin with childbirth, the biographical readings remain founded precisely on Poussin's lack of reproductivity. The artist channels his desire for material children into artistic conceptions. Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock examine the gendered "associations of women with procreativity and men with cultural creativity."[69] The standard narrative is that women artists, who must be like men in order to create,[70] produce work out of a disappointed or rejected maternity. Likewise, Poussin turns his bodily energies into cultural productions. Sublimation, after all, involves the redirection of "primi-

Sublimation, after all, involves the redirection of "primitive" impulses towards supposedly higher and more civilized aims. In the end, the biographical readings imply that Poussin (once again) surpasses the bodily or material level to achieve an intellectual reflection upon reproduction in his images of birth and children.

The artistic paternity of Poussin is ultimately produced in relation to that which it is not: "feminine" or maternal reproductivity. Clearly, such gendered concepts are hardly of marginal concern to constructions of Poussin. Although representations of "femininity" are on the edges of or excluded from considerations of Poussin, they crucially define his paternal authority. Likewise, Poussin's drawing of childbirth exists in the margins, and therefore in the most revealing edges, of constructions of the artist.

This study was meant to make gender visible in representations by Poussin, by stressing that articulations of "femininity" inform contemporary understandings of his work. It was also designed to suggest another way to read the cultural text "Poussin." The potential effects of foregrounding gender and representations of women in Poussin's work can be demonstrated by returning to the self-portrait the artist made for his patron Chantelou (fig. 3). There has been a debate about the identification of the female figure located on the left side of the painting. Is she an allegorical representation of Painting or of Perspective?[71] Do the truncated arms that reach to embrace her represent those of both Poussin and his friend Chantelou?[72] I would ask the viewer to respond differently by focusing more closely on the relation between that female figure and the centralized "main subject," Poussin. The woman is depicted in relation to frames, and indeed she becomes the frame for the male artist. Structurally, her position is similar to that of the *parergon*, which philosopher Jacques Derrida describes as the frame which, although neither inside nor outside of the work of art, enables those distinctions to exist.[73] The question is thus shifted from the classification of the female figure, to the construction of the limits of the category "Poussin." The "centralized" artist becomes the main subject both in relation to and in distinction from the female figure on the edges. She, in turn, allegorically represents his artistic productivity, and thus also points to the "artifice" of his self-representation. The framing and reframing of Poussin, which is foregrounded in this portrait, continues in twentieth-century scholarship.

The title of this article, "Reproducing Poussin," was meant to emphasize the historical remaking of Poussin. I have shown that Poussin is a fluctuating and unstable category that can be reshaped as part of a feminist political practice.

Notes

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1 Virginie de La Batut, "L'exposition: Un entretien avec Pierre Rosenberg, commissaire de l'exposition du Grand Palais," *Connaissance des Arts*, hors série LXII (October 1994), 4-7, esp. 4.

2 Walter Friedländer, *Nicolas Poussin: A New Approach* (New York, 1965), preface. Rosenberg directly compares the 1960 exhibition with the retrospective at the Grand Palais in the catalogue for the latter show. See his "L'année Poussin," *Nicolas Poussin 1594-1665*, eds Pierre Rosenberg and Louis-Antoine Prat (Paris, 1994), 12-27.

3 For reviews which critique the lighting at the Grand Palais, see Humphrey Wine, "Instruction and delight: the Poussin exhibitions at the Grand Palais, Paris, and the Royal Academy," *Apollo*, CXLI (April 1995), 50-53, esp. 50; Olivier Cena, "Poussin 1594-1665. Les élans d'un homme amoureux," *Télérama*, MMCCCXXXIV (5 October 1994), 10-16, esp. 14; and François Souchal, "L'année Poussin," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, CXXIV (December 1994), 1-3, esp. 2.

4 Rosenberg, "L'année Poussin," 15.

5 The essays in the catalogue by Rosenberg and Prat cover a range of topics and were written by authors of various nationalities. However, Sheila McTighe, *Nicolas Poussin's Landscape Allegories* (Cambridge, 1996), 184, note 19, argues that the catalogue "show[s] a remarkable tendency to ignore or downplay past scholarship of any historical breadth or complexity."

6 Elizabeth Cropper and Charles Dempsey, *Nicolas Poussin: Friendship and the Love of Painting* (Princeton, 1996), 3 and 5.

7 See Erica Harth, *Ideology and Culture in Seventeenth-Century France* (Ithaca and London, 1983); Erica Harth, *Cartesian Women: Versions and Subversions of Rational Discourse in the Old Regime* (Ithaca and London, 1992); Joan DeJean, *Tender Geographies: Women and the Origins of the Novel in France* (New York, 1991); and the collected essays in Elizabeth C. Goldsmith and Donna Goodman, eds, *Going Public: Women and Publishing in Early Modern France* (Ithaca and London, 1995).

8 Richard Wollheim, *Painting as an Art*, Bollingen Series XXXV, 33 (Princeton, 1987), 192-204.

9 David Carrier, *Poussin's Paintings: A Study in Art-Historical Methodology* (University Park, PA, 1993), 22.

10 Svetlana Alpers, *The Making of Rubens* (New Haven and London, 1995), 65-100. A recent article on Poussin's *Birth of Bacchus* (discussed later in this article), while not primarily a feminist reading of Poussin, does include an examination of the birth in relation to Aristotle's theory of reproduction. See Margaretha Rossholm Lagerlöf, "Poussin's Use of Rhetoric in the *Birth of*

Figure 10. Nicolas Poussin, *Medea Killing Her Children*, ca. 1648-49. Pen and ink on paper, 15.9 x 16.6 cm. Windsor Castle Royal Library (Photo: The Royal Collection, Her Majesty the Queen).

Bacchus," *Word and Image*, X (April-June 1994), 170-89.

11 See Rosenberg and Prat's catalogue entry in *Nicolas Poussin 1554-1665*, 342, and Pierre Rosenberg and Louis-Antoine Prat, *Nicolas Poussin 1594-1665. Catalogue raisonné des dessins*, I (Milan, 1994), pl. 274, for a complete bibliography as well as information about the engravings after and the copies of this drawing. The provenance of the drawing, transcribed from Rosenberg and Prat, is as follows: Everard Jabach (1610-95; n. 467 de l'inventaire Jabach: *Naissance de la Vierge*, voir Bacou, 1978 [2], n.p.; L. 2961 porté sur les dessins remontés); acquis en 1671 par le cabinet de Roi; Paris, musée du Louvre, département des Arts graphiques (L. 1899 et 2207 en bas à droite et à gauche).

12 Anthony Blunt, *Nicolas Poussin* (1967; London, 1995), 220.

13 Alain Mérot, *Nicolas Poussin*, trans. Fabia Claris (London, 1990), 60; Howard Hibbard, *Poussin: The Holy Family on the Steps* (London, 1974), 34. This narrative also informs the argument that one reason Poussin was unhappy working for the King in Paris during 1640-42 was his discomfort with large decorative cycles.

14 Jacqueline Lichtenstein, *The Eloquence of Color: Rhetoric and Painting in the French Classical Age*, trans. Emily McVarish (Berkeley, 1987), 190.

15 Roland Fréart de Chambray, *Idée de la perfection de la peinture* (Le Mans, 1662), preface. For Poussin's response to Chambray, see Lichtenstein, *The Eloquence of Color*, 138.

16 Alpers, *The Making of Rubens*, 91.

17 Blunt, *Nicolas Poussin*, 218.

18 Michael Podro, "Depiction and the Golden Calf," *Philosophy and the Visual Arts*, ed. Andrew Harrison (Dordrecht, 1987), 3-21; Oskar Bätschmann, *Nicolas Poussin: Dialectics of Painting*, trans. Marko Daniel (London, 1990); and (echoing Denis Mahon) Neil MacGregor, "Plaidoyer pour Poussin peintre," *Nicolas Poussin 1594-1665*, eds Rosenberg and Prat, 106-17.

19 Christopher Wright, *Poussin Paintings: A Catalogue Raisonné* (London, 1985), 123.

20 Mérot, *Nicolas Poussin*, 9.

21 Wright, *Poussin Paintings*, 12.

22 Michelle Hirschhorn, "Orlan: artist in the post-human age of mechanical reincarnation: body as ready (to be re-)made," *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Arts: Feminist Readings*, ed. Griselda Pollock (London and New York, 1996), 110-34, esp. 114.

23 For identification as a process in which the subject both assimilates an aspect of and models itself after the other, see J. Laplanche and J.B. Pontalis, *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (London, 1974), 205.

24 For a discussion of the Oedipal experience and Lacan's arguments about the symbolic order, see Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics* (New York and Oxford, 1983), 126-93.

25 I include my own thesis in this evaluation. This article on Poussin stems from one chapter in my "Complicating Categories: Women, Gender and Sexuality in Seventeenth-Century French Visual Culture," Ph.D. diss., University of Rochester, 1996.

26 McTighe, *Nicolas Poussin's Landscape Allegories*, 3, for example, relates the artist's later, more austere works to his increasing familiarity with the ideology of *libertinage*.

Figure 11. Nicolas Poussin, *Medea Killing Her Children*, ca. 1648-49. Pen, ink and wash on paper, 25.7 x 20 cm. Windsor Castle Royal Library (Photo: The Royal Collection, Her Majesty the Queen).

27 La Batut, "L'exposition: Un entretien avec Pierre Rosenberg," 4.

28 Elizabeth Cropper, "Poussin and Leonardo: Evidence from the Zaccolini MSS," *Art Bulletin*, LXII (December 1980), 570-83.

29 As argued by Andrée Hayum, "Poussin Peintre," *Art in America*, LXXXIII (May 1995), 78-85, esp. 81.

30 André Félibien, *Conférences de l'Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture* (London, 1705), preface, outlines the hierarchy of genres. For a recent account of the academic concept of history painting, see Paul Duro, *The Academy and the Limits of Painting in Seventeenth-Century France* (Cambridge, 1997), 63-106. See also Antoine Schnapper who argues that the "lower" genres, like portraits, continued to be produced by members of the Académie Royale, primarily for financial reasons. See his "Le portrait à l'Académie au temps de Louis XIV," *Dix-Septième Siècle*, CXXXVIII (January-March 1983), 97-123.

31 Norman Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life* (Cambridge, 1988), 136-78.

32 Cited in Mérot, *Nicolas Poussin*, 10.

33 Griselda Pollock, "Preface," *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Arts*, xii-xx, esp. xv. In the same volume, see also her "The politics of theory: generations and geographies in feminist theory and the histories of art histories," 3-21.

34 "Reading for the woman" entails a strategic foregrounding of the representation of women in a deliberate subversion of "traditional" art-historical methods (such as connoisseurship, stylistic analysis and biographical interpretations) that tend to render invisible the visual articulation of sexual difference.

35 See, for example, Jacques Guillemeau, *De l'Heureux accouchement des femmes* (Paris, 1609), Book II. For modern accounts of early-modern birth practices, see Jacques Gélis, *History of Childbirth: Fertility, Pregnancy and Birth in Early Modern Europe*, trans. Rosemary Morris (Boston, 1991); Audrey Eccles, *Obstetrics and Gynaecology in Tudor and Stuart England* (London and Canberra, 1982); and Mireille Laget, "Childbirth in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France: Obstetrical Practices and Collective Attitudes," *Medicine and Society in France: Selections from the Annales: économies, societés, civilisations*, VI, eds Robert Forster and Orest Ranum (Baltimore and London, 1980), 137-76.

36 Pierre Bertrand, "L'univers de la naissance en France dans la peinture et la gravure (1550-1700). La poétique de l'image face à la rhétorique médicale," unpublished mémoire de D.E.A. en histoire de l'art, Paris I, 1990.

37 There were many editions of Rueff's book, including translations into German. For obstetrics in early-modern Germany, see Lynne Tatlock, "Speculum Feminarum: Gendered Perspectives on Obstetrics and Gynecology in Early Modern Germany," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, XVII (1992), 725-60; and Merry E. Wiesner, "The midwives of south Germany and the public/private dichotomy," *The Art of Midwifery: Early Modern Midwives in Europe*, ed. Hilary Marland (London and New York, 1993), 77-94.

38 Alison Klairmont Lingo, "Print's Role in the Politics of Women's Health Care in Early Modern France," *Culture and Identity in Early Modern Europe (1500-1800): Essays in Honor of Natalie Zemon Davis*, eds Barbara B. Diefendorf and Carla Hesse (Ann Arbor, 1993), 203-21, discusses the intended audiences and medical ethics of midwifery manuals.

39 This image is reproduced on the cover of Wendy Perkins, *Midwifery and Medicine in Early Modern France: Louise Bourgeois* (Exeter, 1996). The tired woman is identified as a midwife.

40 Scenes of the birth of Louis XIV include an anonymous drawing in the Cabinet des Estampes, Paris (QB[1] 1638), and an anonymous engraving entitled "L'Heureuse naissance de Monseigneur le Dauphin," also in the Cabinet des Estampes (Coll. Hennin, t. XXXI). Both images show the recovering mother and swaddled infant, although the crowds are larger and include men because of the political nature of the birth.

41 Cited in Rosenberg and Prat, *Nicolas Poussin 1594-1665. Catalogue raisonné des dessins*, I, pl. 274 (see note 11).

42 Walter Friedländer, *The Drawings of Nicolas Poussin: Catalogue Raisonné*, II, in collaboration with Anthony Blunt and Rudolf Wittkower (1949; Nendeln, Liechtenstein, 1968), pl. 140.

43 Jacques Thuillier, "L'année Poussin," *Art de France*, I (1961), 336-48, esp. 336.

44 Rosenberg and Prat, *Nicolas Poussin 1594-1665. Catalogue raisonné des dessins*, I, pl. 274.

45 For a recent study of the *Birth of Bacchus*, see Lagerlöf, "Poussin's Use of Rhetoric in the *Birth of Bacchus*."

46 Overflowing vases are also present in, for example, the following works by Poussin: *The Triumph of Neptune and Amphitrite*, ca. 1643 (Philadelphia Museum of Art), *The Empire of Flora*, 1631 (Dresden Kunstsammlungen), *The Arcadian Shepherds*, before 1630 (Devonshire Collection), and *Midas Bathing in the Pactole*, 1626/27 (Metropolitan Museum of Art).

47 See Pierre Bertrand, "Le portrait de Gabrielle d'Estrées au Musée Condé de Chantilly, ou la gloire de la maternité," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, CXXII (September 1993), 73-82, for an account of the well-known painting, which includes several children, as a celebration of the fecundity of King Henri IV's mistress.

48 Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals*, trans. A.L. Peck (Cambridge, 1943).

49 Pierre Dionis, *Traité général des accouchemens* (Paris, 1718), 245, for example, describes labour as the exit of the infant from its prison. Jacques Duval, *Traité des hermaphrodits, parties génitales, accouchemens des femmes* (Rouen, 1612), 375, likens the womb to a bottle. For other discussions of woman-vessel analogies, see P.J. Vinken, "Some Observations on the Symbolism of the Broken Pot in Art and Literature," *American Imago*, XV (1958), 149-74; Laurinda S. Dixon, *Perilous Chastity: Women and Illness in Pre-Enlightenment Art and Medicine* (Ithaca, NY, 1995), 93-129; and Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY, 1993).

50 Elizabeth Cropper, "On Beautiful Women, Parmigianino, *Petrarchismo*, and the Vernacular Style," *Art Bulletin*, LVIII (1976), 374-94.

51 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge, 1951), VII for Medea; and M, XV for Phaedra.

52 Mieke Bal, "Reading Art?" *Generations and Geographies in the Visual Arts*, 25-41, esp. 32.

53 See Adrian Wilson, "The ceremony of childbirth and its interpretation," *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England*, ed. Valerie Fildes (London and New York, 1990), 68-107; and his more recent *The Making of Man-Midwifery: Childbirth in England 1660-1770* (London, 1995), 25-30.

54 Eight of the fashionable *Les caquets de l'accouchée* were collected in a volume first published in 1623 and reprinted seven times before 1650. See Édouard Fournier, ed., *Les caquets de l'accouchée* (Paris, 1710), for nine of the seventeenth-century *caquets*. For a complaining husband, see anon., *Fifteen Joys of Marriage* [*Les XV Joies de Mariage*], trans. and intro. Brent A. Pitts (ca. 1400; New York, 1985), 22.

55 Domna Stanton, "Recuperating Women and the Man Behind the Screen," *Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Europe: Institutions, Texts, Images*, ed. James Grantham Turner (Cambridge, 1993), 247-65, esp. 255.

56 Gervais de la Touche, *La Tres-Haute et tres-souveraine science de l'art et industrie naturelle d'enfanter. Contre la Maudicte et perverse impericie des femmes que l'on appelle saiges femmes, ou belles meres* (Paris, 1587).

57 Eucharius Rösslin, *When Midwifery Became the Male Physician's Province. The Sixteenth Century Handbook "The Rose Garden for Pregnant Women and Midwives," Newly Englished*, trans. and intro. Wendy Arons (Jefferson, NC, and London, 1994), 34. I have also used Arons' translation of Rösslin's original title. It is interesting that Rösslin's treatise inspired that of Rueff, and thus its frontispiece (reproduced by Arons) is very similar to the plate in Rueff's treatise, although it is without the young female witness and the empty cradle.

58 The faults of "over-confident" midwives are discussed in Guillemeau, *De l'Heureux accouchement des femmes*, 169; Cosme Viardel, *Observations sur la pratique des accouchemens* (Paris, 1671), 64-65; Paul Portal, *La pratique des accouchemens* (Paris, 1685), 8-9; Philippe Peu, *La pratique des accouchemens* (Paris, 1694), 25, 37, 226, 260; and Dionis, *Traité général des accouchemens*, 417.

59 See Richard L. Petrelli, "The Regulation of French Midwifery

during the *Ancien Régime*," *Journal of the History of Medicine*, XXVII (1971), 276-92; Jacques Gélis, *La sage-femme ou le médecin: une nouvelle conception de la vie* (Paris, 1988), 21-64; and the articles in Marland, ed., *The Art of Midwifery*.

60 François Mauriceau, *Les maladies des femmes grosses et accouchées* (Paris, 1668), 270. For the ambiguous position of male practitioners in the lying-in room, see Roy Porter, "A Touch of Danger: The Man-Midwife as Sexual Predator," *Sexual Underworlds of the Enlightenment*, eds G.S. Rousseau and Roy Porter (Chapel Hill, 1988), 206-31. For an example of early-modern criticism of the increasing practice of men in childbirth, see Philippe Hecquet, *De l'indécence aux hommes d'accoucher les femmes* (Trèvoux, 1708).

61 As argued by Perkins, *Midwifery and Medicine*. See also Philip A. Kalisch, Margaret Scobey and Beatrice J. Kalisch, "Louyse Bourgeois and the Emergence of Modern Midwifery," *Journal of Nurse-Midwifery*, XXVI (July-August 1981), 3-17; and the preface by Françoise Olive to the reprint of the 1652 edition of Louise Bourgeois, *Observations diverses sur la stérilité, perte de fruits, fécondité, accouchements et maladies des femmes et enfants nouveau-nés* (Paris, 1992), 7-25.

62 Louise Bourgeois, *Observations diverses sur la stérilité...* (Paris, 1626), Chap. XXXVI, 182-83.

63 For the debate, see Louise Bourgeois, *Fidelle relation de l'accouchement, maladie & ouverture du corps de seue Madame* (n.l., n.d); Charles Guillemeau, *Remonstrance à Madame Bourcier, touchant son apologie, contre la rapport que les médecins ont faict* (Paris, 1627); and Wendy Perkins, "Midwives Versus Doctors: The Case of Louise Bourgeois," *Seventeenth Century*, III (1988), 135-57.

64 For recent accounts of both the female resistance to and participation in the increasing role of men in childbirth and delivery, see Wilson, *The Making of Man-Midwifery*, and Marland, ed., *The Art of Midwifery*.

65 In fact, there have not been any real studies of the drawing, partly because no large-scale painted version of it survives. Poussin's drawings still tend to be understood as preliminary stages in the creation of works in oil. All the same, the drawing has never been approached by twentieth-century art historians as, first and foremost, a scene of birth.

66 Lagerlöf, "Poussin's use of rhetoric," 178.

67 La Batut, "L'exposition: Un entretien avec Pierre Rosenberg," 7.

68 Hibbard, *Poussin: The Holy Family on the Steps*, 42; and Richard Verdi, *Nicolas Poussin 1594-1665* (London, 1995), 37.

69 Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (London, 1981), 6.

70 See Fredrika H. Jacobs, "(Pro)creativity," *Defining the Renaissance Virtuosa: Women Artists and the Language of Art History and Criticism* (Cambridge, 1997), 27-63, for the early-modern association of male artists with creating and female artists with making.

71 Donald Posner, "The Picture of Painting in Poussin's *Self-Portrait*," *Essays in the History of Art Presented to Rudolf Wittkower*, eds D. Fraser et al. (London, 1967), 200-03.

72 Cropper and Dempsey, *Nicolas Poussin: Friendship and the Love of Painting*, 193.

73 Jacques Derrida, *The Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago, 1987), 17-147.