Ashgate Studies in Childhood, 1700 to the Present

Series Editor: Claudia Nelson, Texas A&M University

This series recognizes and supports innovative work on the child and on literature for children and adolescents that informs teaching and engages with current and emerging debates in the field. Proposals are welcome for interdisciplinary and comparative studies by humanities scholars working in a variety of fields, including literature, book history, periodicals history, and print culture and the sociology of texts; theater, film, musicology, and performance studies; history, including the history of education; gender studies; art history and visual culture; cultural studies; and religion.

Fashioning Childhood in the Eighteenth Century

Age and Identity

Edited by

ANJA MÜLLER

Otto-Friedrich-Universität Bamberg

ASHGATE
Contents

List of Figures
Notes on Contributors
Acknowledgements
Introduction
Anja Müller

Part I Cultural Contexts

1 The Doctor and the Child: Medical Preservation and Management of Children in the Eighteenth Century
Adriana S. Benzaquén

2 Children as Patients in German-Speaking Regions in the Eighteenth Century
Iris Ritzmann

3 Observing Children in an Early Journal of Psychology
Karl Philipp Moritz's 'Liebe und Laßton (Know thyself)
Anthony Knap

4 The Legal Status of Children in Eighteenth-Century England
Anna-Christina Giannopoulos

5 Children, Adolescents and Fashionable Urban Society in Eighteenth-Century England
Peter Borray

6 The Child in the Visual Culture of Consumption 1790-1830
Patricia Crow

7 Locke's Education or Rousseau's Freedom
Alternative Socializations in Modern Societies
Christoph Hornwitschka

vii
ix
xv
1
13
25
33
43
53
63
81
Chapter 10

Greuze and the Ideology of Infant Nursing in Eighteenth-Century France

Bernadette Fort

One of the foremost painters of the family in eighteenth-century France, Jean-Baptiste Greuze was received at the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in 1736 and for two decades enthralled collectors and the public at the biennial Salons with gripping visual narratives staging key events of family life, such as Le Père de famille livrant la bible à ses enfants (1753), L'Accorderie de village (1761), La Fuite en Egypte (1765), La Mère bien aimée (1765), La Rédemption paternelle (1765 and 1777-78), and Le Génie des rois (1774), to name only a few. Although these genre paintings teem with children and Greuze was also a much-appreciated portraitist of young people from aristocratic families, there has been almost no work on his representations of childhood. This essay focuses on the imagery of early childhood that he pioneered, the infant years, and considers a few select pieces in his important contribution to a cultural debate that fascinated public opinion in the mid-1750s and 1760s, the debate on maternal vs. what was then called 'nursery' nursing.

Before 1740, few philosophers, educators and doctors had shown interest for the newborn child, nor had French painters, for that matter, except in images of the Christ child or mythological parts. Greuze's debut in genre painting coincides with the high point of the campaign in favour of maternal nursing that gained tremendous popularity with Rousseau's Émile (1762). Starting in the mid-1750s, a number of advice manuals to mothers, treatises on the health care of children, education treatises and reflections by moralists, theologians and cultural critics homed in on the question of maternal nursing. At that time, only a

1. Jean and Aimée Étienne's 1984 exhibition catalogue is a noteworthy exception. There is no book-length study of Greuze's work apart from Bouchiètre's biography and Ledbury's joint study on Sérurier and Greuze. However, the catalogues of the two exhibitions curated by Edgar Mauhli (1976 and 2000) provide excellent illustrations and stimulating discussions of important works.

2. This topic is broached in part in Carol Duncan's pathbreaking essay, but her emphasis is on motherhood rather than childhood, as is Sheriff's essay on Fragonard.

3. For primary texts, see Dumas (1769), Le Rebours and Vautermond. For the social history of infant nursing, see Balbi, Flandrin. Hunt 1796, Senier, Shorter and
fraction of women nursed their infants. The great bulk of mothers - peasant women, wives of artisans and shopkeepers, servants - could ill afford to take care of nurseries and had to send out their infants to wet-nurses. For middle- and upper-class women, a combination of entrenched tradition, fears about the reported hardships of nursing and habitual reliance on domestics made it imperative to employ a wet-nurse. Whereas affluent families with large homes could afford a live-in nurse, most women sent their infants out to a nurse in the country, where they stayed for the first five years of life - if they made it that far. Statistics gathered by contemporary officials and modern historians show the enormous cost in child mortality that resulted from such a social practice. Nearly 80 per cent of infants died in their first year, the vast majority of which at their nurses' hands.

Churchmen and moralists had always pointed to maternal nursing as the first duty of a mother, invoking the argument from design (why did God give women breasts if not to nurse their offspring?) and its secular version, 'the voice of nature', which enjoined all females, animal and human alike, to nurse their young. In the late 1750s and 1760s, a campaign was mounted to return women to their 'natural', goddess-nurtured or nature-endowed duty. Authors invoked an array of biological arguments, affective considerations and moral imperatives. The physician Charles Vandermonde was one of the first writers to claim the child's right to maternal milk - a testimony to the increased valuation of the child as an individual.1 At the same time as mother's milk was glorified, wet-nurses were systematically berated as dirty, greedy, ignorant, moved solely by the lure of money and so negligent of their young charges as to be guilty of involuntary infanticide. In Émile, Rousseau graphically describes a common practice of hanging the swaddled baby on a nail and going on with their chores until the infant's face turned purple and she fainted (Rousseau 1699, p. 255). He clinches his distaste against wet-nurses with typical virulence: 'Shes who nurses another's child in place of her own is a bad mother. How will she be a good nurse?' (ibid., p. 257). On the contrary, by enhancing the moral standing and sentimental rewards of the breastfeeding mother,2 and by incarnating this ideal in the supremely

Sussen. See also Gadswich's important discussion, pp. 43-50 and 55-66.

1 See figures cited by Flandrin, p. 204; Senier, pp. 367-8; and Sussen, p. 20.
2 [M'Jlle] is a good mother that has mothers in turn ... children have at any moment the right to demand it.' Cited by Badinter, pp. 192-3 n.100 ("Le lait ... est un bien dont les mères ne sont que dépositaires ... les enfants sont en droit à chaque instant de le revendiquer"). All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.
3 See also the article "Nourrice" in the Encyclopédie and Mme de Pierreuseu's Carac-
tères (1760), cited by Thirié, pp. 359-60.
4 Celle qui nourrit l'enfant d'une autre au lieu du sien est une mauvaise mère; comment sera-t-elle une bonne nourrice?
5 Rousseau promises breastfeeding mothers 'a solid and constant attachment on the part of their husbands, a truly filial tenderness on the part of their children, the esteem and respect of the public, easy deliveries without mishap and without aftermath, a firm and vigorous health; finally the pleasure of seeing themselves one day imitated by their own

Attractive heroine of his celebrated novel Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse (1761), Rousseau gave a powerful impulse to a new ideology of the nuclear family that bound mothers to their offspring in an unprecedented way.

To what extent did Rousseau, working in the same cultural and ideological context as Rousseau, share the philosopher's strictures against wet-nurses and his exaltation of the breastfeeding mother? The topic carried for the painter a personal dimension, as his wife had decided to place their two daughters with a wet-nurse at birth (another daughter had died in infancy).3 It is possible that the oil sketch of Les Sevareuses, shown at the Salon of 1765 and now lost,4 but engraved in 1769 by Jean-Baptiste Tillieux and Pierre Charles Ingouf (fig. 13), was first imagined during one of the rare visits he paid to his infant children in Champagne, a half-
day's journey from Paris by coach.5 In this image, two older women and five children are pictured in a humble cottage; the author near a high narrow window which evokes contemporary descriptions of such habitations.6 This sunken locale looks crowded and in a state of disarray: the wash is drying on a line, kitchen utensils are piled on the table, children's toys are strewn on the floor, along with a big pillow, a chest and kindling, and the cat is allowed to play in a rickety cradle about to topple over. The slumped bodies of the two dry nurses - so called as their job was to wear infants over several months by feeding them bouteille - make them look lethargic and listless. One of them, seated in the foreground, holds a heavy sleeping girl in her arms and casts an inquisitive look over her shoulder to the viewer. Posited as an intruder by this look which brazenly returns his own, kept at bay by this female Cerberus, today's beholder cannot shake the impression of malaise that emanates from this dark work.

daughters and cited as examples to others' daughters'. - [P]our promettre à des dignes matrons un attachement solide et constant de la part de leurs maris, une tendresse vraiment fil-
diale de la part de leurs enfants, l'estime et le respect du public, d'heureuses couches sans ac-
c孔子 and sans suite, une santé ferme et vigoureuse, enfin le plaisir de se voir un jour imiter par leurs filles, et citer en exemple a celles d'authors' (Rousseau 1660, pp. 288-9).
6 In a Mémoire written to obtain divorce in the early 1790s when it was legalised, Greuze accused his wife of callous indifference to their children, claiming, for example, that she would forget them for a year at a time when they were at the convent (Gioncourt, p. 235).
7 A copy of the lost painting is in the Nelson-Atkins Museum, Kansas City. Mum-
hall 2002, p. 115, disputes its attribution to Greuze.
8 Greuze's friend, the engraver Johann Georg Wille, recorded in his diary that he and the painter Doyen accompanied the Greuzes on 19 September 1763 on a visit to their first daughter, then eighteen months, at her nurse in Champagne (Marshall 1976, p. 98).
9 The dwellings of many nurses are badly sited. Several have only a single room in which are crowded together a number of beds and cots. Some have but a single bed and three nurseries' (Shuter, p. 179).
10 Damien's judgement, however, may be too one-sided: 'this is a slovenly, crumby-
looking nurse, surrounded by ill-behaved children. Neither she nor her companion seem to care about the children in her charge, some of whom are most of her own' (p. 577).
Yet this reading was not the one registered by contemporary reviewers of the exhibition, who saw only an exquisite cabinet picture in the Dutch taste. Diderot wrote that "Octave wouldn't have disowned this work" (Diderot on Art I, p. 110) and praised it for its realism and its enticing factura, but remained blind to its subject.  

Mathon de la Cour, an art critic who stood out for his sensibilité, lauded Greuze's expert depiction of miniature subjects in this piece, observing that the artist had looked at nature "as a Lover, with eyes that miss no detail but that embellish everything" (p. 11). These critics' indifference to the children motif caused them in effect to miss an important dimension of the work, Greuze's gendered adaptation of the children's games topics from the Dutch and Flemish tradition (see Snow and Duranti). In Les Sourcettes the children are already practising in their games the roles that society will prescribe to them: domination for the two boys, here performed on animals (the boy in the foreground, whip in hand, holds a dog on a leash; another, at the back, is putting a bird in its cage), and restraint, domesticity, and reproduction for the girls (one sits quietly with a wooden doll in her lap, the other is asking for help in getting dressed). At the same time, the chained dog, the caged bird and the wooden doll are images of captivity that apply metaphorically to the children themselves.

---

Fig. 14 Jean-Baptiste Greuze, Woman with a Child on Her Lap, 38 x 27 cm, red chalk on cream paper, The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg

The difficulty of appraising the multiple meanings of a work such as this and its resistance to a universal interpretation are only enhanced by looking at preparatory drawings and their migration, via the painting, into the medium of engraving. For example, in his striking preliminary red-chalk drawing of the nurse in the foreground (fig. 14), Greuze seems to have been mainly interested in capturing her
hunched-over shape, weighted by the relaxed body of the plump sleeping girl. Yet he accentuated the woman's left eye and upper lip with bold strokes of his chalk, giving her an ominous expression. The engravers Jean-Baptiste Tilliard and Pierre-Charles Legrand (possibly under the artist's supervision) went further and imparted a mean and sly look to her pouting face. With its heavy dark masses and sharp contours, their black-and-white engraving, which lacks the warmth of the red-chalk preparatory drawing, infuses the scene with a subtle melancholy. Its gloomy title (Les Sorenois) highlights explicitly the weaning from the breast (here a surrogate, one to boost) which, for Greuze, inaugurates the child's entry into culture.

Two more drawings on the theme of infant nursing, Le Départ en nourrice and Le Retour de nourrice, executed in the 1760s,14 highlight the originality of Greuze's position in the campaign against wet-nursing and show that he was far more interested in the psychological consequences of this nursing practice than in lecturing women or issuing moralistic dictates. The trauma of the young child's separation from its mother and home is a recurrent theme in his work.15 This pair of drawings, which were later engraved, reveals that Greuze went further in the investigation of the emotional damage entailed for both the mother and the child in the separation. Le Départ en nourrice (fig. 15) represents an infant about to be taken away by the country by a hired nurse. The mother, in relinquishing her infant, is deferring to custom rather than to necessity, as hers is a prosperous household: the women and children are comfortably dressed; they live in a large, well-lit stone house that stands in a private courtyard recessed from the street by a wide-open arch. The mother has chosen to form out her baby rather than employ a live-in nurse. Yet Greuze is not assigning blame to her: she has exercised obvious care in the choice of her surrogate: young, robust, ample-boasted, docile but not subservient. Greuze's wet-nurse looks like the paragon vaunted in the Encyclopédie.16

---

14 See Marshall 1976, pp. 98 and 100. Le Départ en nourrice was engraved as La Précaution sensiblement by Jean-Baptiste Blaise Simonet and again by the etamener Claude Henri Watelin. Le Retour de nourrice exists in several different versions (Marshall 1976, p. 100). It was also engraved in 1867 by François Hubert as Les Peintures de l'enfance, ou le retour de nourrice (Beauvoir, p. 157).

15 See, for example, the pair of drawings, The Education of a Young Servant (Albertine, Vernet) and The Departure of a Young Servant (Amsterdam Historical Museum), in Marshall 2002, Ps. 97, 96, and 96, as well as Marshall's perceptive comments on these works.

16 Among the qualifications of a good wet nurse, the article "Nourrice" lists a good constitution, good breasts, good milk and good morals, and requires that she be "vigilant, wise, prudent, kind, joyful, sober and moderate in her inclinations to love" — "il faut qu'elle soit vigoureuse, sage, prudente, douce, joyeuse, gai, sobre & moderate dans son penchant à l'amour" (vol. XI, p. 261).
Bernadette Fort

Simonet accentuated this drama by delineating the facial traits of the infant more precisely and by emphasizing the mother's look of apprehension. The title of this engraving, *La Privation sensible*, indicates that the 'privation' will be mutual, a fact recorded in the composition. The wide stone barrier over which the mother leans for one last embrace emphasizes the harshness of the impending separation. The diagonal line that drops from the grand-mother's head to the mother's and the infant's, ending in the basket tied to the donkey, reinforces the idea of an expulsion from the maternal paradise and a descent into a hostile world. Down in the yard, a man swings the leather strap that will secure the child in the basket ready to take him away. Below the infant, two wide-eyed toddlers flatten themselves against the wall in fear of two large dogs. Spatially cut off from their family by the wall, the dogs and the donkey, these anxious-looking children metaphorically figure the traumatic separation to which the infant has been condemned.

In this image, then, unlike the ethics of wet-nursing, Greuze does not condemn either mothers or nurses. Rather, he highlights powerfully the emotional tides levied on mothers and infants by this widespread social practice.

The pendant to this drawing, *Le Retour de nourrice* (fig. 16) displays the same child, now three or four years old, handed back by the nurse to his family, which is gathered indoors to celebrate his healthy return to the family hearth. However, frightened by the press of brothers and sisters, uncles and grandmothers who rush to inspect him (Greuze has humorously armed the grandmother with spectacles), the child pulls back in fear from his own mother, who smiles affectionately as she reaches out to him. A stranger now even to the house dog, the child seeks refuge in his nurse's skirts, whose body, arched over him, still cradles him. A contemporary viewer might have interpreted the child's smooth rejection of his mother as an example of the vicious nature of children before a proper education or as a result of the coarse habits and early manners they were said to acquire with uneducated nurses. But this scene, dated by Edgar Munhall to the 1760s, must be read along with Rousseau's warning in *Emile* that the mother who 'alienates her right' to another woman will be rightly punished when she sees 'her child love another woman as much as she does and more' (Rousseau 1969, p. 257, transl. altered).

Significantly, Greuze left a verbal description of a similar scene, which shows him to perfect union with Rousseau:

*Thibault Returns from the Wet Nurse*. Young Thibault returns from the wet-nurse with all his language; the nurse presents him to his mother who runs forward to welcome him; the child draws back fearfully into the arms of the only mother he has known, and in this way reproaches his real mother for her indifference (Brockett, p. 162; my italics, B.F.)

"[Un autre inconvénient], c'est celui de perturber le droit de mère, ou plutôt de l'aliener, de voir son enfant aimé une autre femme naturellement plus qu'elle."

This scene was to take place in a visual narrative in twenty-six episodes, *Bazille et Thibault ou les deux éducatrices*, inspired by Hogarth's moralizing *progress*, *Industry and Idleness* (1747). Like Hogarth with his two prentices, Greuze wanted to trace the trajectories of two young men, one good and one evil, over a lifetime. However, unlike Hogarth, he started the narrative at their births, locating their future virtue and vice as adults literally in the kind of early nurture they received. Brought up by his mother at home and cherished by his parents, Bazille soon becomes a generous and upright citizen and is rewarded with important functions in the state. Carried away to a nurse at his birth while his mother and father look on indifferently, Thibault becomes a brutal man, an unprincipled soldier, a gambler, thief, and murderer, and ends up sentenced to the gallows — by a reluctant Bazille, who has become Lieutenant criminel of the province. Few contemporary texts deploy the grim Calvinistic determinism with which this projected narrative substantiates mother's milk. Greuze's visual lesson in the *Départ* and the *Retour* has the stark simplicity of a mauchlein melodrama: the sin of the mother's neglect will come back to haunt her in her child's predictable rejection. Yet, the second
Bernadette Fort

drawing also manifests an unusual attention to the child's perspective. His facial expression and receding gesture highlight the feeling of alienation, indeed, of suffocation, he experiences upon his reintegration into his family after a forced absence of several years. In the end, then, Greuze, focusing in these pendants on key moments of the wet-nursing initiation, was more concerned with highlighting the double affective damage it caused than assigning guilt to mothers who chose not to breastfeed. What he chose to emphasize was a double loss, the mother's loss of the child, physically at birth and emotionally when he returns, and the irreparable deprivation of motherly affection for the child in the crucial years when a lasting bond could be established. Given Greuze's passion for working out his subjects in contrasted pairs, it can hardly be a coincidence if the artist, at the 1765 Salon, counterbalanced his ambivalent image of "morénaie" nursing in Les Servantes with a sketch that extolled maternal nursing, La Mère bien-aimée. That sketch, which enjoyed a phenomenal success at the Salon, is lost, but Munhall recently drew attention to a highly finished drawing executed by Greuze after the 1769 painting to serve as a model for the engraver Carlo Antonio Porpora (Fig. 19). 28 The scene depicts the return of a father from the hunt, as he beholds the exhilarating spectacle of his young wife, who, breast exposed and a wan smile of exhaustion resting on her lips, is being nearly smothered by the caresses of their six children, one of whom is still an infant. This image offered viewers a highly provocative and condensed image of the ineducible rewards for all family members concerned—parents, children, and grandparents (the grandmother, too, is ecstatic)—of rearing infants and children in the home in close contact with the mother.

Most discussions of La Mère bien-aimée, then and now focusing on the title figure and the husband-wife relationship, have generally overlooked the children or treated them as peripheral actors. Yet there are six of them, three boys and three girls, between the nursing age and pre-adolescence, and they are crucial to the visual rhetoric that Greuze employed to fashion his emblematic image of the harmonious, tightly bonded family. The number of children and their incremental spacing shows the artist in step with advanced views on the biology of reproduction and nursing, including ideas about the delaying effects of lactation on the mother's ability to conceive. 29 Having borne six children in less than ten years, Greuze's mother is a superb "mère nourricière," an idea emphasized by her bare and erect breast, recalling prevalent medical views that only erect nipples could adequately feed infants. 30 The artist suggests a direct cause-and-effect link between breastfeeding and the survival of children: at a time of high infant mortality, this mother has managed to keep her children alive and healthy. But the children here support more than an ideology of maternal nursing. Their massive presence, encircling the mother, suggests a complete rethinking of their role in the family structure. Historians of the family have argued that the old "vertical" model of the hierarchical family based on lineage gave way in the eighteenth century to a "horizontal" model connecting family members with each other through the strength of shared sentimental bonds. 31 Greuze's Mère bien-aimée stands as the visual emblem of this new conceptual model, literalized by the planar unfolding of familial ties in a freeze-like movement from the father on the left to the grand-mother in the middle and the grand-daughter and grand-grandson surrounding the mother on the right.

The artist's greatest originality, however, lies in his invention of the fundamentally sexual nature of familial bonds and of the children's place in the family's economy. According to Foucault, "The familial unit, as it was valorized in the course of the eighteenth century, allowed the formation along two principal dimensions—the husband-wife axis and the parents-children axis—of the principal elements of the dispositif of sexuality."(Foucault 1976, pp. 142-3.) A drawing by Greuze etched and engraved by Jean Michel Moreau and Pierre Charles Ingold, La paire du marbre ou le bonheur conjugal (Fig. 17), most likely intended as a representation of Bazzle's birth, 32 shows a young father and mother beaming tenderly over their baby's cradle—one of the first modern representations of parental joy in Western art and a testimony to the emerging "self" of the child.

What is remarkable in this image is the strong feeling of sexual fulfillment mixed with conjugal tenderness shared by the parents at the sight of their newborn. Greuze conveys this virally with the mother's ecstatic gaze at her husband and the double rhetoric of her hands, one of which rests high on his thigh while the other caresses his face as he lovingly gazes at the infant. Here the symbiotic relationship of the mother-father-infant triad is inscribed formally in the composition: the elliptical circle (or triangle) described by the mother's elegantly bent body and, moving counter-clockwise, the couple's joined heads, the father's arm gently lifting the drapery over the cradle, and, finally, the cradle itself. Sexual energy

---

28 See Munhall 2002, Pl. 70 and pp. 200-203. The painting was completed in 1769 and entered in the Salon i, but its owner, the marquis Jean-Joseph de Laborde, prohibited its exhibition, which provoked a public outcry. See Diderot's Salon of 1769 (Diderot 1995, pp. 15-17 and 91). The painting was engraved by Jean Martin in 1773. 29 See Marie-Ange Li Le Roborst's personal testimony: "In breast-feeding a long while, one conceives fewer children" but 'more of them survive', quoted in Théré, p. 553.

30 Vellaniemlter, quoted in Senior, pp. 381 and 384. In an early preliminary drawing for the mother (St. Petersburg, see Munhall 2002, Pl. 40), the nipple is barely visible.
31 See Moos's insightful essay on "The Beauvais Family Revisited."
32 "La cellule familiale, telle qu'elle a été valorisée au cours du XVIIIe siècle, a permis que sur ses deux dimensions principales—l'axe maternel et l'axe parental-éducatif—se développent les éléments principaux du dispositif de sexualité."
33 In his planned "progress" Greuze describes a different scene, but keeps the motif of the father-nurse-child in his triad. The Birth of Young Bazzle, Bazzle (père) is sitting with his wife who has just given birth to a son; she holds the child in her arms; her head is propped on her hand and slightly thrown back; she looks at Bazzle tenderly and holds one of his hands; his other hand is placed round her shoulders and in this attitude he appears to be consoling her for the pain she has so recently suffered (quoted in Brookner, p. 163).
A few critics, among whom Diderot, noticed that in the 1765 sketch of *La Mère bien-aimée*, the mother’s expression, head thrown back, eyes swimming and lips apart, was identical with that of a pastel *Head of a Woman* exhibited at the same Salon (école Greuze) as it turned out, which Diderot described euphemistically as ‘a paroxysm that is sweeter to feel than it is decorous to paint’ (Diderot on Art).

p. (101). 25 The sexual valence of the mother’s ecstatic smile and strangely unfocused gaze is reinforced by the father’s drooping breeches and his upturned gun, signalling the heavy sexual charge of this new representation of parental bliss. Far from an obstacle to conjugal happiness, the children in *La Mère bien-aimée* appear intimately linked to the husband’s and wife’s sexual love, a vivid reminder of that love and a new incentive to it. They participate in the engendering and promotion of the sexually hooded family. In his original preface to his family drama, *Le Père de Famille*, which he dedicated to an august mother, the Princess of Nassau-Saarbrück, Diderot stressed the link between the voluptuous pleasure experienced in the act of procreation and in the caresses of the child that issues from it (Diderot 1766, vol. VIII, p. 893). In *La Mère bien-aimée* Greuze highlights the connection between sexual pleasure and procreation by placing the mother close to the heavily curtained marital bed at the back of the room, letting its drapes softly rest over the infant’s cradle next to her. In a partial compositional study in the *Albertina* at Vienna (fig. 18), the artist conveyed the same idea with a different, though equally striking, visual metaphor: the crown of the cradle, towering above the mother, looks like a huge upward pointed breast. In this imagery, the mother’s erect breast functions as the shared physical symptom of impending lactation and erotic stimulation. From Ambroise Paré to Théophile de Bordeaux’s *Recherches anatomiques* (1752), medical works had suggested that there was a physiological link between the two and that lactating women felt ‘a more or less voluptuous irritation’ when suckling infants. In the finished painting, the overwhelmed, orgasmic expression of Greuze’s *La Mère bien-aimée* takes over the ideology of sexualized nursing and holds out to mothers the promise of a delicate sexual pleasure as an incentive to nursing.

Not all viewers were as pleased with the primor with Greuze conspicuously gave children in this work. Madame Geoffrin, a famous salon hostess and a friend of the arts, reportedly disapproved *La Mère bien-aimée* as a ‘frivole d’enfant’, intimating that such a group of unclothed children was detestable to the seriousness of painting. However, Geoffrin’s culinary metaphor fails to recognize how carefully Greuze individualized the six children, and how subtly he keyed their looks, attitudes, and emotions, to their sex, age, temperament and to the position they occupy in regard to the mother. The lavish preparatory drawings of separate children

---

25 I have discussed the implications for the artist of using his wife as a model (Fort 2003, pp. 110-12). The pastel *Head* is held in Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art (see Minshall 2002, PI. 41).

26 On Paré, see Kastenholz/Rouquet, p. 86. Borisov is cited by Vila, p. 67.

27 Greuze reportedly parodied Madame Geoffrin for this critique by staging her as an old and dowdy schoolmistress wobbling a whip in a school trencher with pretty girls (Minshall 2002, PI. 46).

28 This was well registered by Diderot; ‘There are at least six of them. The youngest is in her arms; a second clings to one side, a third clings to the other; a fourth grasps the back of the chair and kisses her forehead; a fifth is at her cheek; a sixth stands with his head in her
executed in red chalk (some of which are preserved in the State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg) signal the high degree of Greuze’s affective and artistic investment in these figures. A comparison of the compositional study in Vienna (fig. 18), which was probably executed prior to the 1765 sketch, with the Sydney drawing (fig. 19), done at least four years later, shows a remarkable evolution in Greuze’s conception of the children motif.

Fig. 18 Jean-Baptiste Greuze, Compositional study for La Mère bien-aimée, 1765?, pen and brush with black label and brown ink over graphite on white paper, Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna

lap, unhappy with his role.’ Diderot also perceptively remarked on Greuze’s interest in child psychology, as he made ‘one of them cry because he’s not singled out from the others’ (Diderot on Art 1, p. 105, translation modified). This last observation suggests that the sketch exhibited in 1765 was closer to the Albertina drawing than to the finished painting and drawing.

38 See Munhall 2002, Pls. 44 and 45. The girl is discussed below.

In the compositional study, the stress is on the anecdotal and humorous dimension of this family scene. In the children’s contorted postures, Greuze brings out their rivalry for the mother’s attention and their jockeying for her caresses. In the finished drawing, however, he smoothed their excessive gestures, toned down their caricatural attitudes, and emphasized a diversity of emotions in their facial expressions.

A point by point comparison of the compositional sketch and the full drawing reveals the extent to which Greuze individualized and refined the affective and sensual link between each child and its mother. At the centre of this group, appropriately closest to the mother, Greuze placed the youngest of the brood, a six-to-nine-month-old infant. No swaddling, diapers or swaddling for this one, in accordance to the latest prescriptions by Buffon and Rousseau of allowing infants free use of their limbs from birth on. Vindicating ideas that infants exempt from
the maillot would use their hands to interact physically with their mothers. 

Greuze shows this infant in perfect symbiotic play with his. In the final work, he barred the infant’s round belly, strategically placing its navel in immediate proximity to the mother’s breast, thus implanting in yet a different way to the sexual link between birthing and nursing that creates the infant-mother dyad. At the same time, this infant, who seems to fly around the mother’s head like a modern-day putti with round cheeks and fine hair, caresses her rock – always an erotic part in Greuze’s images of women – with his plump little arm, and his adoring gaze seems to swallow her whole.

Below the infant Greuze placed the next-youngest child between the mother’s legs, a position again subtly linking sexuality and childbirth. In the Albertina sketch, this child is a male urchin trying awkwardly to keep hold of the mother’s left hand and forearm. Greuze transformed him in the Sydney drawing into a girl gently resting her head on the mother’s lap in a gesture of loving abandon. This child’s dress is unaltered and her stays lie discarded on the floor, suggesting that the effusions of family bonding have priority over the constraints of sartorial fashion and social convention. Moving clockwise to the left, the viewer’s gaze encounters the Comic tumble of two youngsters as they push and shove to gain a better spot at the mother’s body (she has abandoned her right arm to them). Again, Greuze emphasized in the Sidney drawing how their eyes, fixated on the mother’s, attempt to draw her gaze back to them. At the top of this pyramid of children, an eight-year-old boy, having casually secured a commanding position in this battle for the mother’s body by climbing on a table behind her, delicately steadying her head with his hand, deposits a kiss of pure love on her forehead. In the finished drawing, Greuze imbued his lowered eyes and kneeling attitude with a quasi-religious feeling. Compared to the rustic tomboy of the sketch, this child appears an emblematic devotee of refined mother love.

The most important change between the preliminary and the finished drawings concerns the girl on the right. Greuze had initially drawn her as a much younger girl crying by herself, perched at failing to engage her mother’s attention. But in the final drawing, she becomes the mother’s miniature ambassador, as well as the scene’s interpreter and the artist’s intermediary to the viewer. The opposite of the straitlaced nurse in the Serreonce, whose gaze arrests viewers at the threshold and fords her entry, this smiling pre-adolescent female child invites the spectator, if a woman, to follow the mother’s example or, if a man, to join in the worship of the mother and emulate the father. Her flirtatious smile and posture, her ‘sassy glance’, noted by modern critics and underscored by her theatrical half-curving pose, are highlighted in a remarkable red-chalk preparatory drawing at the State Hermitage (fig. 20). They point to the pre-adolescent’s developing awareness of her feminine charms and to her desire to imitate the mother as she reaches adulthood. In her threshold position between the picture and the outside world, but

33 Badinter, pp. 199-200; Thérèse, p. 561; and Mercier, pp. 31-7.

also between innocent childhood and sexual womanhood, mediating the sexual and moral message of the whole tableau to the viewer, this subtly eroticized girl exemplifies Greuze’s deft use of children figures to enlist the beholder’s engagement in the affective, moral and sexual dynamic of the image.

Fig. 20 Jean-Baptiste Greuze, Study of a Girl Standing, 32 x 21.4 cm, red chalk on cream paper, The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg

By insisting (as Friedrich Meckel Grimm tells his readers in an addendum to Derbet’s Salon of 1789) on keeping the face and body of his own wife for the figure of the mother despite his patron’s wishes, Greuze was projecting in this painting complex phantoms of his own, the sexual nature of which I have analysed elsewhere (Fort 2003, pp. 110-11). But equally, if not more important was the fantasy of the tightly bound nuclear family that he fashioned as a visual ideal for the large Salon-going public. His La Mère Salon-aimée is a highly original fusion of private dreams with contemporary literary and cultural ideals of the
family that flourished in the writings of philosophers, doctors and educators at the height of the Enlightenment. What Greuze produced with the swirling circle of children surrounding their mother was a mère en gloire, a secular and sexualized version of the oldest female icon of Western painting, the Virgin Mary surrounded by a halo of angels. It was an image blending religious and Rousseauian features, one in which children, down to the infant at the breast, were presented both as the messengers and the message of a powerful, newly crafted family ideology.

Chapter 11

Childhood and Juvenile Delinquency in Eighteenth-Century Newgate Calendars

Uwe Böker

In his early sketch "A Visit to Newgate" Dickens introduces the reader to 'a portion of the prison set apart for boys under fourteen years of age' and, in the condemned ward, a 'handsome boy, not fourteen years old, and of singularly youthful appearance even for that age', sentenced to death for burglary, awaiting the recorder's report and the king's pardon (pp. 205 and 207). Children under the age of seven, however, could no longer be hanged; between seven and fourteen they were held to be doli incapax (as enunciated by Blackstone's Commentaries in 1766, 'the capacity of doing ill, of contracting guilt, is not so much measured by years and days, as by the strength of the delinquent's understanding and judgment' [May 8]), but if doli capax, the death penalty was possible (Knell, pp. 188). This more 'human' approach was due to the emergence of the new concept of the 'juvenile delinquent'. Thus, the London Philanthropic Society was founded in 1788 primarily for the Prevention of Crimes, and for a Reform Among the Poor, by training up to Virtue and Industry the Children of Vagrants and Criminals, and such who are in the Paths of Vice and Infamy' (Schlossman, p. 327), and after the turn of the century parliamentary reports like that of the Committee for Investigating the Alarming Increases of Juvenile Crime in the Metropolis (1816) expressed a growing anxiety about juvenile offenders, especially after 1820, the period when the up to fourteen-year-olds in the national population reached a peak at 39 per cent, compared to 29 per cent in 1670 (King/Noel, p. 31; King 1998, pp. 136-40). The middle and upper classes were deeply worried about the East London street 'Arabs', an army of criminals born and bred into the so-called 'dangerous and criminal classes' supposedly undermining society's order and well-being. Public opinion was greatly alarmed at the prospect of 'Society in Danger

\[1\] According to Chief Justice Hale, children could be sentenced to death: 'An infant within the age of discretion kills a man, no felony; as if he be nine or ten years old. But if, by circumstances it appear he could distinguish between good and evil, it is felony: ... But in such cases execution in prudence resorted to obtain a pardon' (cf. Knell, p. 203).

\[2\] On the rite of juvenile delinquency between 1780-1840, see King 1998.