



Medieval and Renaissance Lactations: Images, Rhetoric, Practices (Women and Gender in the Early Modern World)

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The premise of this volume is that the ubiquity of lactation imagery in early modern visual culture and the discourse on breastfeeding in humanist, religious, medical, and literary writings is a distinct cultural phenomenon that deserves systematic study. Chapters by art historians, social and legal historians, historians of science, and literary scholars explore some of the ambiguities and contradictions surrounding the issue, and point to the need for further study, in particular in the realm of lactation imagery in the visual arts. This volume builds on existing scholarship on representations of the breast, the iconography of the Madonna Lactans, allegories of abundance, nature, and charity, women mystics' food-centered practices of devotion, the ubiquitous practice of wet-nursing, and medical theories of conception. It is informed by studies on queer kinship in early modern Europe, notions of sacred eroticism in pre-tridentine Catholicism, feminist investigations of breastfeeding as a sexual practice, and by anthropological and historical scholarship on milk exchange and ritual kinship in ancient Mediterranean and medieval Islamic societies. Proposing a variety of different methods and analytical frameworks within which to consider instances of lactation imagery, breastfeeding practices, and their textual references, this volume also offers tools to support further research on the topic.

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Editorial Review

Review

Medieval and Renaissance Lactations offers a systematic study of the visual and written representations of lactation during the late Middle Ages and early modern period, focusing on the politics of "milk sharing" rather than only on breastfeeding itself. This innovative approach not only addresses the unique status of wet nurses within Islamic law, but also attends to the ways in which men could become privileged figures in relation to the provision of milk.' --Professor Lianne McTavish, University of Alberta

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