

Word count: Text 7,549 words; Notes 2,961 words; Total 10,511 words

Keywords: infancy, prodigies, science, speech, Protestantism

Olivia Formby, St John's College, University of Cambridge
occf2@cam.ac.uk

Crying in the Womb: Emotions, Sound, and Personhood in Early Modern England

Abstract

Crying in the womb (*vagitus uterinus*) was an extraordinary phenomenon or prodigy by which a foetus in the later stages of gestation could be heard to cry before its birth. This article traces the way that crying in the womb in early modern England was consistently interpreted, across religious, medical, and popular texts, as an emotional expression. Hearing crying in the womb affirmed the unseen presence of a body and soul, already miserable with sin and able to convey this humanness, and affect the emotions of others, with the sound of its voice. This article reveals that hearing non-verbal emotional expressions was central to the early configuration of English Protestant personhood.

Introduction

In a letter to the Royal Society of London on 13 November 1709, William Derham (clergyman and natural philosopher) relayed his “Satisfaction of visiting a Woman brought to Bed this day sevensnight of a Boy, that had Cry’d in her Womb [...]”.¹ Derham reported that “the Child” began his lachrymose campaign five weeks before birth, “Crying little or much”, night and day, on one occasion “seventeen times in half an Hour”. The midwife had told him the “Crying might be heard into the next Room; and sometimes seemed to be so Hearty, that

¹ William Derham, "Part of a Letter from the Reverend Mr. W. Derham, F. R. S. to Dr. Hans Sloane, R. S. Sec. Giving an Account of a Child's Crying in the Womb," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* 26 (1708-9): 485.

the Child would sob again”.² Despite the “Apprehensions” and “Pains” which he caused his mother in utero, the boy now appeared “Lusty and Strong, and is, since its Birth, a very quiet Child”. This brief account of an episode of crying in the womb, solemnly given by a man of faith and of science, encapsulates how this extraordinary phenomenon could operate in the early modern English imagination as an aural point of contact with the unborn. In the “Hearty” sobbing of this “Child”, it hints at the centrality of human emotions to the early configuring of personhood.

Although references to crying in the womb (*vagitus uterinus*) can be traced in medical literature into the twenty-first century, its emotional resonance in early modern England has not been studied.³ In Aristotelian philosophy, the capacity for emotions was attributed to the sensitive faculty of the soul which humans shared with animals; this, combined with outdated assumptions about the superiority of reason and speech, has prevented historians from examining the role of emotions in establishing infant personhood.⁴ Yet early modern thinkers understood that the human expression of emotion indicated not just a basic, animal capacity for feelings, but was the unique result of sensory processing by the human brain (using its faculties of imagination and cognition) and the Christian heart.⁵ Historians of emotions similarly understand emotional expressions as outward, social communications of inner,

² Derham, "Part of a Letter," 485-6.

³ For twentieth-century cases: George H. Ryder, "Vagitus Uterinus," *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* 46, no. 6 (1943); P. M. G. Russell, "Vagitus Uterinus: Crying in Utero," *The Lancet* 269, no. 6969 (1957); Robert G. Blair, "Vagitus Uterinus: Crying in Utero," *The Lancet* 286, no. 7423 (1965); For a recent reference: Michael A. van Manen, "The First Cry of the Child," *Qualitative Health Research* 27, no. 7 (2017): 1072.

⁴ John Sutton, "Soul and Body," in *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Peter R. Anstey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Herman W. Roodenburg, "The Body in the Reformation," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Protestant Reformation*, ed. Ulinka Rublack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 647-8.

⁵ Roodenburg, "The Body."

biologically- and cognitively-informed processes, powerful in their ability to be sensed and experienced by others.⁶

Crying in the womb has received scant direct historical attention. Alexandra Walsham identifies the long tradition by which the very young (and the very old) were considered spiritually close to God, making them likely candidates for God's messages. Walsham notes that there "are many reports of foetuses crying inauspiciously from the womb and newborn babies uttering menacing forewarnings before making a premature exit from the earthly realm".⁷ Though these infants are described as "prophets", Walsham also ties crying in the womb closely with monstrous births: "morality and embryology interlocked" such that monstrous bodies were able to project God's messages too.⁸ Anna French discusses older, verbal children as prophets.⁹ Though French argues that infants born with unsightly deformities were easily "dehumanised" in early modern print culture, she astutely notes how monstrosity and prophecy offered children "a form of authority" in Protestant England.¹⁰ As we will see, prodigious foetuses sometimes gained authority through sounding human.

In later sixteenth and seventeenth-century Protestant England, crying in the womb appeared across a range of print and manuscript genres. While incidents were frequently reported from the Continent, it could be local and relatively lowkey, as evidenced by the simple 1638 report of "a childe hearde to crye in its mothers belly before yt was borne att

⁶ This article is situated in the histories of the emotions and the senses. See: Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006); Jan Plamper, "The History of Emotions: An Interview with William Reddy, Barbara Rosenwein, and Peter Stearns," *History and Theory* 49 (2010); Rob Boddice and Mark Smith, *Emotion, Sense, Experience*, ed. Jan Plamper, Cambridge Elements in Histories of Emotions and the Senses, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

⁷ Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 207-9.

⁸ Walsham, *Providence*, 194-209; Alexandra Walsham, "'Out of the Mouths of Babes and Sucklings': Prophecy, Puritanism, and Childhood in Elizabeth Suffolk," in *The Church and Childhood: Papers Read at the 1993 Summer Meeting and the 1994 Winter Meeting of The Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. Diana Wood (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 295-6.

⁹ Anna French, *Children of Wrath: Possession, Prophecy and the Young in Early Modern England* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2015), 107-34.

¹⁰ French, *Children of Wrath*, 145-56.

Hammersmithe” in the diary of a London MP.¹¹ In wonder books and popular pamphlets, it was treated as a prodigy which fell into a larger category of infant-centred wonders with ancient and medieval precedents, including “monstrous” (malformed) births and miraculous newborn speech.¹² These events testified to the biblical promise that God’s power would be given “out of the mouths of babes and sucklings” and were used as warnings against all manner of sin in an age “full of signs and wonders” which peaked in times of religious and political upheaval.¹³ Over the course of this period, crying in the womb took on new religious and scientific purposes. It appeared in baptismal tracts and natural histories authored by clergymen. Here it was proof of the foetus’s soul, used in confessional debates surrounding infant baptism and, in the later seventeenth century, as evidence against the threat of atheism. In medical texts like anatomical treatises and midwifery manuals, physicians and midwives contemplated the bodily mechanics of crying in the womb, in the context of a rising interest in embryology: was it proof that the foetus could breathe? Some were sceptical; others entertained that this (albeit rare) event was the result of the rupturing of the waters and the stimulation of a well-formed foetus. At the turn of the eighteenth century, crying in the womb was perhaps no less wonderful than it was in the late sixteenth, though it was taken less as a foretelling of divine wrath than as an emblem of the power of God and nature, a medical rarity that attested to an ongoing fascination in the start of human life, as seen in Derham’s letter. But it was not a straightforward progression from prodigy to nature. Just as Katharine Park and Lorraine Daston have shown in relation to monsters, crying in the womb was able to

¹¹ British Library, Add MS 35331, Diary of Walter Yonge, 1628-42, f. 145.

¹² For example, there are instances of crying in the womb in the fifth-century writings of Saint Augustine and in the twelfth-century Ulster Cycle. See: Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Generations of Feeling: A History of Emotions, 600-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 181; HW Gallagher, "Three Pregnancies in Iron-Age Ireland: Crying in the Womb, Hydramnios and Caesarean Section," *The Ulster Medical Journal* 74, no. 1 (2005): 68. Miraculous newborn speech as discussed in the Catholic context of miracles: Abigail Brundin, Deborah Howard, and Mary Laven, *The Sacred Home in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 271-7.

¹³ Psalm 8:2 (AV). Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750* (New York: Zone Books, 1998), 189; Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 363.

take on meanings which “overlapped and coexisted during much of the early modern period”.¹⁴ This article is not a complete or chronological history of crying in the womb, though it hints at changes over time. Rather, it traces the way that this phenomenon was consistently interpreted across genres, by parents, physicians, and ministers, as an emotional expression.

The article begins by fleshing out the idea of early modern Protestant personhood, which was tied closely to the possession of a rational soul and the sacrament of baptism. It establishes that ensouled foetuses were widely understood in religious and medical thinking to be capable of experiencing emotions, before turning to an examination of crying in the womb as the extraordinary expression of this ordinary capacity. *Vagitus uterinus* was congruous in meaning with normal infant crying after birth: both were commonly translated as human expressions of the misery of original sin and the need for maternal succour. Indeed, the article shows that crying in the womb, which was always heard in the latest stages of gestation, was frequently represented as the sound of a viable newborn child. Finally, it listens closely to prodigious narratives of crying in the womb, to understand how infants’ emotional expressions could be invested with affective power, to bear evidence of the foetus’s soul and their closeness to God, and to move and inspire knowledge of God in hearers. Crying in the womb marvellously amplified the ability for the sounds of infants’ emotions to convey humanness and affect others. Ultimately, this study calls historians to attune their ears to the preverbal voices of ordinary infants that punctuated the everyday early modern soundscape.

¹⁴ Daston and Park, *Wonders* 173-214.

Early modern writers used the terms “foetus” and “infant” interchangeably, along with “embryo”, “child”, “babe”, “feature”, and “creature”, all in reference to the unborn.¹⁵ In the context of crying in the womb, which was sounded by foetuses on the cusp of being born, early modern writers most commonly used the term “infant” and the pronouns “it” or “he”. This article reflects the language of the historical texts at hand, with the understanding that the term “infant” today usually refers only to a young (born) child.¹⁶

Early modern personhood

The topic of foetal personhood is inherently political, and the questions we might ask today of when human life – when the “child” – begins, and is recognised as a person, are not new. Crying in the womb shows how formulations of “foetal” personhood in the later stages of gestation drew upon and translated to concepts of “infant” or even “Protestant” personhood after their entry into the world. This phenomenon was always recorded in the latest stages of gestation and, as such, was not connected by contemporaries to early modern discussions of abortion. Instead, it was connected, implicitly and explicitly, to ongoing uncertainties about the sacrament of baptism and to new scientific understandings of the foetus’s bodily capacities. The snatch of personhood that crying in the womb might represent to early modern hearers befits a model of “subjective and relational” foetal personhood that scholars of the twenty-first-century abortion debate are working towards, which takes into account the length of a pregnancy, its “incorporation into social structures”, and its “wantedness”.¹⁷ Carla

¹⁵ Modern historical studies mirror this slippage. Christopoulos identifies that early modern Italian writers used various interchangeable terms for the unborn “in common parlance without careful thought to semantics” though these terms carried differing weights of personhood. This is very often the case in English texts as well. John Christopoulos, *Abortion in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2021), 39-41.

¹⁶ OED, n. “infant”.

¹⁷ This nuanced definition of personhood is put forward by Donley and Lens in the context of the modern abortion debate. They argue that the abortion rights movement should “join forces with the pregnancy loss community by acknowledging subjective fetal value” in order to “be less alienating” and to normalise all pregnancy outcomes, including abortion and stillbirth. Greer Donley and Jill Wieber Lens, “Abortion, Pregnancy Loss, & Subjective Fetal Personhood,” *Vanderbilt Law Review* 75, no. 6 (2022).

Spivack has similarly shown that the length of pregnancy was key to imagining foetal personhood in early modern medical and legal thinking: “the fetus only gradually approached biological, and then human, status”.¹⁸ The foetuses in this article were close to birth and their parents (when identified) were usually godly and married, which in this period largely equated to being “wanted”.¹⁹

What made the early modern foetus a person? Following Aristotelian tradition, contemporaries theorised that the possession of a rational, immortal soul set “man” apart, and that the faculty of rational speech most clearly distinguished human from animal.²⁰ At about the fortieth day of gestation, when the body had developed the basic shape of a human (“formation”), it was bequeathed its soul by God (“ensoulment”) and, from the moment body and soul were joined, the foetus had its own capacity for “sense and feeling”, it could “stirre and moove” itself.²¹ However, it was not until about the fourth month that these motions were perceptible to the mother, so it was often at this point, of the first sensed foetal movements (“quickening”), that a pregnancy was confirmed, culturally and legally.²² Historians have emphasised the uncertainties of early modern pregnancy, even after quickening, as the unseen womb harboured the possibility of false conception, miscarriage, or

¹⁸ Carla Spivack, "To 'Bring Down the Flowers': The Cultural Context of Abortion Law in Early Modern England," *William and Mary Quarterly* 107 (2007): 125-27.

¹⁹ Of course, this is simplistic, but children in marriage were “normative” and a “blessing”: Daphna Oren-Magidor, "Conception, Pregnancy and Childbirth," in *Early Modern Childhood: An Introduction*, ed. Anna French (London: Routledge, 2020).

²⁰ Sophia M. Connell, "Animal Cognition in Aristotle," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Biology*, ed. Sophia M. Connell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 195.

²¹ Jakob Rüff, *The Expert Midwife, or an Excellent and Most Necessary Treatise of the Generation and Birth of Man* (London, 1637), 40-1; Jacques Guillemeau, *Child-Birth, or, the Happy Deliverie of Women. Wherin is Set Downe the Gouernment of Women ... To Which is Added, a Treatise of the Diseases of Infants* (London, 1612), 6; Vivian Nutton, "The Anatomy of the Soul in Early Renaissance Medicine," in *The Human Embryo: Aristotle and the Arabic and European Traditions*, ed. G. R. Dunstan (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1990).

²² Abortion was a crime only after quickening: Spivack, "To 'Bring Down the Flowers'."; Convicted women who proved “quick with quick child” could “plead the belly” and have their death sentence delayed: Sara M. Butler, "Pleading the Belly: A Sparing Plea? Pregnant Convicts and the Courts in Medieval England," in *Crossing Borders: Boundaries and Margins in Medieval and Early Modern Britain*, ed. Sara M. Butler and K. J. Kesselring (Leiden: Brill, 2018).

birth defects until the moment of birth.²³ Indeed, the sensory experience of seeing the foetus has been privileged as the most effective way to know it as human, such that the advent of the use of ultrasound technology in 1960s prenatal care is seen as a watershed for the construction of foetal personhood.²⁴ Laura Gowing writes in 2003:

In the last twenty years, commentators have argued, the foetus has become a person. [...] Early modern women had a different image. The foetus in the womb was felt as a mass of tissue and blood; only after quickening, and not always then, did it approach the status of unborn child.²⁵

Early modern women did not contend with “accurate, personalised images of the foetus within them”, but they were subject nevertheless to visual representations of male and active foetuses, as well as of highly embedded and dependent foetuses, something that Gowing argues worked to hold mothers responsible for the production of healthy, well-formed babies.²⁶ More recently, Rebecca Whiteley has argued that the sensation of quickening, combined with the viewing of early modern “birth figures” (medical images of foetuses in position for birth), could help mothers to “adjust their picture of their unborn child as it grew, from something that might be false or monstrous or might simply slip away, to a viable infant”.²⁷

²³ Laura Gowing, *Common Bodies: Women, Touch and Power in Seventeenth-Century England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 111-48; Cathy McClive, "The Hidden Truths of the Belly: The Uncertainties of Pregnancy in Early Modern Europe," *Social History of Medicine* 15, no. 2 (2002); Cathy McClive and Helen King, "When is a Foetus Not a Foetus? Diagnosing False Conceptions in Early Modern France," in *L'Embryon Humain à Travers L'Histoire: Images, Savoirs et Rites*, ed. Véronique Dasen (Gollion: Infolio, 2007), 229-30.

²⁴ See, for example: “Seeing the Baby: The Ultrasound Ritual” in Lara Freidenfelds, *The Myth of the Perfect Pregnancy: A History of Miscarriage in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 152-65. Deborah Lupton, *The Social Worlds of the Unborn* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 22.

²⁵ Gowing, *Common Bodies*, 122.

²⁶ In emphasising the uncertainties of quickening, Gowing critiques earlier work by Barbara Duden which offered that pre-modern women had more autonomy to “make sense of their bodies” before technological interventions like ultrasounds. Gowing, *Common Bodies*, 122-38, 48. See: Barbara Duden, *Disembodying Women: Perspectives on Pregnancy and the Unborn* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993).

²⁷ Rebecca Whiteley, *Birth Figures: Early Modern Prints and the Pregnant Body* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2023), 61-5.

Protestant debates about infant baptism reveal that ambiguities about personhood continued even after the birth of a viable human child. In Catholicism, baptism cleansed original sin and provided salvation; infants who died unbaptised were destined to eternity in Limbo (*Limbus Infantium*).²⁸ In Reformed soteriology there was only heaven and hell, and all souls (infants included) were predestined by God to either place; only God knew who had been “elected” for heaven. Baptism was technically no longer required for salvation, yet the Church of England retained the sacrament, still considered by most as a vital rite of passage into the community, providing an “outward badge” of Protestant personhood.²⁹ Anna French has shown that baptism, and official provisions for emergency baptism (which continued up to 1604), offered pastoral reassurance to English Protestant parents that their infants were saved in the event of an early death, not having been able to live long enough to demonstrate their faith.³⁰ Indeed, infants’ bodies were weak at birth, characterised by an abundance of wet humours which drowned their ability to exercise reason and to articulate rational speech.³¹ The purposes of baptism were hotly debated long into the seventeenth century.³² For some of

²⁸ Recent work on postmortem caesarean section for the purpose of foetal baptism and intrauterine baptism by means of a syringe of holy water in the eighteenth-century Spanish Empire attests to the continued significance of the rite in Catholicism: Martha Few, Zeb Tortorici, and Adam Warren, "Introduction: Postmortem Cesareans and Pedro José de Arrese's Guatemalan Treatise in Historical Context," in *Baptism Through Incision: The Postmortem Cesarean Operation in the Spanish Empire*, ed. Martha Few, Zeb Tortorici, and Adam Warren (University Park, Pennsylvania: The University of Pennsylvania State University Press, 2020); George A. Klaeren, "Sacred Embryology: Intrauterine Baptisms and the Negotiation of Theology and Health Sciences across the Eighteenth-Century Spanish Empire," in *Health and Healing in the Early Modern Iberian World*, ed. Margaret E. Boyle and Sarah E. Owens (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2021).

²⁹ John Cotton, *The Grounds and Ends of the Baptisme of the Children of the Faithfull* (London, 1646), f. B1r; David Cressy, *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 97-194; Anna French, "Disputed Words and Disputed Meaning: The Reformation of Baptism, Infant Limbo and Child Salvation in Early Modern England," in *Sin and Salvation in Reformation England*, ed. Jonathan Willis (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2015), 157-67.

³⁰ French, "Disputed Words," 165-7; Alec Ryrie has shown that Protestants could find "comfort" in the knowledge that their dead infants were likely saved, baptised or not: Alec Ryrie, "Facing Childhood Death in English Protestant Spirituality," in *Death, Emotion and Childhood in Premodern Europe*, ed. Katie Barclay, Kimberley Reynolds, and Ciara Rawnsley (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

³¹ Bright describes infants as "overcharged with humiditie": Timothie Bright, *A Treatise of Melancholie* (London, 1586), 72; Philippa Maddern and Stephanie Tarbin, "Life Cycle," in *A Cultural History of Childhood and Family in the Early Modern Age*, ed. Sandra Cavallo and Silvia Evangelisti (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), 113-15; Hannah Newton, *The Sick Child in Early Modern England, 1580-1720* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 41.

³² French, "Disputed Words."

the hotter sorts of Protestants, the infant's inability to reason, and therefore to experience true religious conversion at baptism, was cause to deny or delay it. Anabaptists were radical non-conforming Protestants who advocated the delay of baptism until the "years of discretion"; these beliefs were feared as schismatic and cast as heretical in England, though in reality Anabaptism was more popular (and persecuted) on the Continent.³³ French has dubbed the theological uncertainty surrounding infant baptism as a "Protestant limbo", in which the doctrine of predestination, "the need to guard against Anabaptism", and to meet the pastoral cares of their congregations were never entirely balanced by English theologians.³⁴

Historians have sometimes equated infants' speechlessness with a tenuous humanity. Keith Thomas has suggested that infants fell into a category of "inferior humans" in the early modern mindset, specifically due to their lack of language.³⁵ Erica Fudge has even more radically posited that early modern "humans can fail to *be* human", and that the child was essentially animal until they learned to laugh.³⁶ Historians of the family now largely agree that early modern children were loved from birth; with this in mind, it is difficult to imagine that many early modern parents were uncertain of their progeny's humanity.³⁷ The seventeenth-century writer George Sibscota explained that while newborn infants could not speak, they only "required [more] to the framing of speech", that is time and practice.³⁸

³³ Keith Thomas, "Age and Authority in Early Modern England," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 62, 1976 (1976): 225; David Loewenstein, *Treacherous Faith: The Specter of Heresy in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 157-87; C. Scott Dixon, "The Radicals," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Protestant Reformations*, ed. Ulinka Rublack (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

³⁴ French, "Disputed Words," 170-2.

³⁵ Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England, 1500-1800* (London: Allen Lane, 1983), 41-3.

³⁶ Erica Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning: Animals, Rationality, and Humanity in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2006), 48; Erica Fudge, "Learning to Laugh: Children and Being Human in Early Modern Thought," in *Childhood and Children's Books in Early Modern Europe, 1550-1800*, ed. Andrea Immel and Michael Witmore (New York: Routledge, 2006), 19-40.

³⁷ On parental love for children: Patricia Crawford, *Blood, Bodies and Families in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 2004), 140-74; Linda A. Pollock, *Forgotten Shildren: Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Newton, *Sick Child*.

³⁸ George Sibscota, *The Deaf and Dumb Man's Discourse. Or a Treatise Concerning Those that are Born Deaf and Dumb, Containing a Discovery of Their Knowledge or Understanding ...* (London, 1670), 8.

While some “brutes” (animals) could communicate with each other and even imitate human speech, they did so with the use of their sensitive or animal faculty alone. Human speech, which infants were born with the potential to develop, required the rational faculty, which belonged only to man.³⁹ In recent work about early modern preachers’ development of signed languages for deaf parishioners, Rosamund Oates proves that religious speech was not composed of sounded words alone, but of visual gestures too.⁴⁰ I want to argue further that speech could also encompass affective non-verbal sounds, namely crying.

Historians have focused on the ways in which the infant’s humanness and personhood, ultimately validated by baptism, was revealed by touch and sight. Crying in the womb, hitherto either excluded from histories of early modern generation or bound up in discussion with monstrous births, complicates things further. Here is a public, heard emotional expression of an unseen entity that was commonly labelled the voice of a “child”, and was often followed by a non-monstrous birth. While extraordinary in its occurrence, crying in the womb invites us to consider what it usually meant to sound human.

Emotions in the womb

Early modern foetuses were not thought to be empty automata. Indeed, though religious and medical writers alike disparaged the infant’s inability to reason, the idea that the ensouled foetus was capable of a range of meaningful emotions permeated contemporary writing. Expressions of emotions in the womb, as in quickening or in crying in the womb, were outward indications of the foetus’s ability for inner emotional experience, and thus evidenced the union between the foetus’s unseen body and soul. Indeed, quickening could be seen as the foetus’s first emotional expression, for bodily motion was inherently e-motional in early

³⁹ Sibscota, *Deaf and Dumb* 48-89.

⁴⁰ Rosamund Oates, "Speaking in Hands: Early Modern Preaching and Signed Languages for the Deaf," *Past & Present*, no. 256 (2022).

modern thinking.⁴¹ The physician and anatomist Helkiah Crooke was adamant that the “motion of the Infant is not Naturall but voluntary”, the muscles being “commanded” by the soul to contract and move.⁴² Crying was emotional too, seen as the product of both the Galenic humours and the passions of the soul.⁴³ At all ages, the shedding of tears was the healthful flow of water from around the heart, which was the bodily location for Protestant emotional experience.⁴⁴ While the process of emotion began in the brain, where impressions of the outer world were received and evaluated by the sensitive and intellective soul, the metaphorical and literal moving of the heart was essential to the inner experience of piety.⁴⁵ In early modern England, crying could be the outward sign of godly sorrow, a highly valued Protestant emotion.⁴⁶ But, more simply, it confirmed the basic human possession of a soul, brain, and heart.

While crying in the womb usually signified feelings of misery, to “cry” was not always to shed tears, but could be considered an exclamation of any emotion or speech. In his *Discourse Touching the Nature of Prodigies* (1660), the English astrologer John Gadbury took such a broad approach to this phenomenon as to incorporate foetuses speaking, laughing, or crying: “Then for children to speake in their *Mothers womb*, or *laugh* or *cry* there; as in *Marucina* a child in his Mothers belly was heard to cry; and in *Kent in England* a Boy was heard to *laugh before he was born* [...]”.⁴⁷ The account of the crying infant in

⁴¹ Michael Stolberg has shown were imagined as the dynamic movements of the spirits and blood within the body, intimately connected to outward movements of the body: Michael Stolberg, “Emotions and the Body in Early Modern Medicine,” *Emotion Review* 11, no. 2 (2019).

⁴² Helkiah Crooke, *Mikrokosmographia: A Description of The Body of Man* ... (London, 1615), 268.

⁴³ Leah Astbury, ““Ordering the Infant”: Caring for Newborns in Early Modern England,” in *Conserving Health in Early Modern Culture: Bodies and Environments in Italy and England*, ed. Sandra Cavallo and Tessa Storey (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 84-5.

⁴⁴ Ulinka Rublack, “Fluxes: The Early Modern Body and the Emotions,” trans. Pamela Selwyn, *History Workshop Journal*, no. 53 (2002): 6-7; Alec Ryrie, *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 20-6.

⁴⁵ Roodenburg, “The Body,” 653.

⁴⁶ Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 187-95.

⁴⁷ John Gadbury, *Natura Prodigiorum: Or, a Discourse Touching the Nature of Prodigies* ... (London, 1660), 6-7, original emphasis.

Marucina can be traced to the first-century historian Livy's history of Rome, where it is actually given that "a child in the womb of its mother cried out Io Triumphe!"⁴⁸ Foetal joy was also discussed in relation to its benefits to foetal development. In the Swiss surgeon Jakob Rüff's *The Expert Midwife* (printed in English in 1637), expectant mothers are counselled to have "a merry heart" and to "endeavour to moderat joyes and sports": "For these things doe both exhilarate and cheare up the Infant, and stirre up all the faculties of the Feature, and doe strengthen and comfort him in his parts and members [...]."⁴⁹ The idea that strong impressions upon the mother's senses could excite her passions and have deleterious effects upon the body of the foetus (sometimes to cause miscarriage or malformation), is well known, but the "maternal imagination" could also translate to effects upon the foetus's own senses and emotions.⁵⁰ In his popular *Directory for Midwives* (first printed 1651), the English physician Nicholas Culpeper explained that the foetus was so dependent on the mother's body, "it is probable, that whatsoever moves the faculties of the soul in the mother, may move the same in the child".⁵¹ When the foetus was sufficiently formed and strengthened, it was a commonplace for medical writers to represent its own "desire" to be born, its "coveting" of nutriment, air, and light, as driving the foetus to break the membranes and begin labour itself.⁵²

⁴⁸ Titus Livius, *The History of Rome: Books Nine to Twenty-Six*, trans. D. Spillan and Cyrus Edmonds (1868), Book 24: 10.

⁴⁹ Rüff, *Expert Midwife*, 67.

⁵⁰ For effects of the maternal imagination on the foetus's body: Herman W. Roodenburg, "The Maternal Imagination: The Fears of Pregnant Women in Seventeenth-Century Holland," *Journal of Social History* 21, no. 4 (1988); Marie-Helene Huet, *Monstrous Imagination* (Cambridge, Massachusetts Harvard University Press, 1993); Ulinka Rublack, "Pregnancy, Childbirth and the Female Body in Early Modern Germany," *Past & Present* 150, no. 1 (1996).

⁵¹ Nicholas Culpeper, *Culpeper's Directory for Midwives: Or, a Guide for Women* (London, 1676), 146. The most radical view of the effects of the maternal imagination on the foetus's senses and emotions are elaborated by the French philosopher Nicolas Malebranche, first printed in English in 1694: Nicolas Malebranche, *Father Malebranche His Treatise Concerning the Search After Truth*, trans. T. Taylor, 2nd ed. (London, 1700), 54-63.

⁵² Ambroise Paré, *The Workes of that Famous Chirurgion Ambrose Parey. Translated Out of Latine and Compared with the French*, trans. Thomas Johnson (London, 1634), 898; See for instance: Culpeper, *Directory for Midwives*, 170; Aristoteles *Master-Piece, Or The Secrets of Generation Displayed in all the Parts Thereof*, (London, 1684), 22-3.

The gospel account of John the Baptist leaping for joy in his mother Elizabeth's womb when she was visited by the newly-pregnant Virgin Mary provided early modern theologians with a biblical precedent for foetal emotions:

And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.⁵³

John not only hears from within the womb, or at least receives an impression of this hearing via his mother's senses, he reacts to this experience with "joy"; his leaping (or quickening) stems from his close encounter with God, embodied in the "fruit of [Mary's] womb", and is a sort of prodigious emotional expression that brings on the Holy Spirit. In a 1618 sermon, the English preacher Bartholomew Parsons described this event as a definite "token" of the coming birth of Jesus, and as explicitly akin to crying in the womb: John the Baptist "being in his mothers wombe and not yet borne, leaped with a propheticall exultation, and did (as it were) crie in the wombe of his mother".⁵⁴ Early moderns debated the exceptionality of this holy infant's joyful leap. For example, the Baptist preacher Henry Denne called it a "*singular miracle*" which did not reflect all infants' ability to experience faith.⁵⁵ In a 1605 tract, the preacher William Hill links the motion of John the Baptist in utero, which Elizabeth herself translates as a sign of his joy, with the infant's capacity for all other "affections":

By the motion of the Child in *Elizabeths* wombe, my proposition is most plaine, the evidence most certaine; for that *Elizabeth* acknowledge her Babe to have done

⁵³ Luke 1:41-4 (AV).

⁵⁴ Bartholomew Parsons, *The First Fruits of the Gentiles. In Three Sermons Preached in the Cathedrall Church at Sarum* (London, 1618), 51.

⁵⁵ Henry Denne, *Seven Arguments to Prove, That in Order of Working God Doth Justifie His Elect, Before They do Actually Believe* (London, 1643), 2-3.

it for joy. *Affections*; such as Mirth, Sorrow, Joy, Discontentment, Gladnesse, and Lamentation, cannot be sayd to be in a body, which hath not a reasonable Soule.⁵⁶

Hill extends this holy example of emotion to suggest that all infants possess a “reasonable Soule” in the womb and are therefore worthy of baptism at birth. His argument is somewhat unusual in that it is at odds with the Aristotelian model which relegates emotion to the sensitive faculty; in the strictest sense, emotions alone should not provide “evidence most certain” of the “reasonable” soul that set humans apart.⁵⁷ Yet Hill clearly imagines these emotions – “Mirth, Sorrow, Joy, Discontentment, Gladnesse, and Lamentation” – to be firmly part of the human condition, from the womb. Hill’s confident reckoning that the unborn infant’s motions and emotions signified the presence of their rational soul reflects the unresolved theological tensions surrounding infant baptism; it hints at a broader willingness to overlook the unseen-ness of the foetus and the infants’ animal irrationality, in favour of their humanness.

Crying in the womb as an emotional expression

Crying in the womb frequently sounded like ordinary infant crying and usually preceded the birth of a well-proportioned child. In prodigious literature, this event was frequently distinct from monstrous births, which conversely worked to de-humanise the newborn infant. In medical and natural philosophical writing, it was recognised as the early sounding of the first cry usually anticipated at birth. In all cases, crying in the womb was an emotional expression of the unborn, akin in emotional meaning to infant crying. Though unseen, the humanness of the sounder was conveyed by the sound itself, for, as one sixteenth-century writer put it, “man” was the “onely of al creatures to weepe”.⁵⁸ In a further short treatise supporting his

⁵⁶ William Hill, *The Infancie of the Soule: Or, the Soule of an Infant ...* (London, 1605), f. E2r, original emphasis.

⁵⁷ Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning*, 7-38; Sutton, “Soul and Body.”

⁵⁸ John Bishop, *Beautifull Blossomes, Gathered by John Byshop, from the Best Trees of All Kyndes, Divine, Philosophicall, Astronomicall, Cosmographical, Historical, & Humane* (London, 1577), 17.

account of crying in the womb in 1709, William Derham insisted that the sound was “so eager and hearty, as to end in Sobbing, like what is observable oftentimes in Born Infants”.⁵⁹

Due to their wet humoral nature, young children were naturally prone to crying, which in moderation was understood as a good form of exercise that dispelled “superfluous humours” and helped to regulate the passions.⁶⁰ The first cry (*vagitus*) after birth signified the infant’s viability: “the strength of the breath” and its aptitude for life outside the womb.⁶¹ Thus it was a key consideration in early modern infanticide trials, where the absence of crying could support claims of a stillbirth.⁶² Monstrous infants, while usually born alive, frequently died shortly after birth, their malformities rendering them unviable.⁶³ Following birth, infant crying was as an audible and visual communication of the infant’s desire for care and succour, and thus demanded a response.⁶⁴ The Presbyterian minister Henry Newcome attested in his 1695 treatise on maternal breastfeeding that a good mother held the “greatest Love” for her babe such that “the Mothers Ears would have so affected her Heart [at her infant’s crying], as to send her in all haste to quiet it”.⁶⁵

Crying in the womb has only been discussed by historians in its prodigious context, as an event akin to monstrous births, rather than as a form of ordinary infant crying. Katharine Park and Lorraine Daston describe the horror that monsters could evoke as the result of “the confusion of categories – animal and human”, as well as the way they forebode the coming of God’s wrath for sin.⁶⁶ In contemporary prodigious writing, both crying in the womb and

⁵⁹ William Derham, “A Short Dissertation Concerning the Child’s Crying in the Womb,” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* 26 (1708-9): 489.

⁶⁰ Newton, *Sick Child*, 34-41; Astbury, “Ordering the Infant,” 83-7.

⁶¹ Culpeper, *Directory for Midwives*, 229.

⁶² Garthine Walker, “Child-Killing and Emotion in Early Modern England and Wales,” in *Death, Emotion and Childhood in Premodern Europe*, ed. Katie Barclay, Kimberley Reynolds, and Ciara Rawnsley (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

⁶³ Daston and Park, *Wonders* 181.

⁶⁴ Astbury, “Ordering the Infant,” 83-5.

⁶⁵ Henry Newcome, *The Compleat Mother. Or an Earnest Perswasive to All Mothers (Especially Those of Rank and Quality) to Nurse their Own Children* (London, 1695), 66-7.

⁶⁶ Daston and Park, *Wonders* 181.

monstrous births are framed as wonderous signs of divine providence, intended by virtue of their shock value to warn society at large to fear God and to turn away from sin.⁶⁷ Yet while monstrous births worked by seeing that the unseen foetus had developed terribly wrong, crying in the womb worked by hearing the ordinary and viable sound of infant crying preternaturally early. Occasionally, the two events were joined in a single birth narrative. In a 1661 book detailing a strangely full “year of Prodigies and Wonders”, which the anonymous authors reported were a sign of God’s wrath at the ejection of “godly, *preaching Ministers*” at the Restoration, an account from Scotland is cited of:

a Woman brought to bed of a certain Creature, which before it came forth was heard to squeek, & cry in the Womb, and as it was comming out, it did squeek so terribly that every one run away affrighted, At last the Minister with several others came in, & there was born a Creature all hairy, beneath the girdle like a man Child, & above the shouldiers two heads, on[e] upon the top of the other, the upper like the face of a Lion, and did immediately run up & down the house, crying three times woe, woe, woe, to the world; The Father of this monster knoct it on the head, this is a certain truth[.]⁶⁸

Here, the repeated use of the word “Creature” (as meaning “created thing or being”) and the presence of a minister emphasises God’s hand in the prodigy. The terrible “squeek”-ing noise, the infant’s deformities (especially it’s “Lion” face), and unnatural behaviour are highly unsettling. While malformed infants were generally still considered to be ensouled humans “by definition”, Maaïke van der Lugt suggests that monstrous births which could be seen as the product of bestiality, or lacking “a well-formed head”, tested this principle. In this case, the line between being “like” a human and “like” an animal is so broken, this “monster” can be “knoct” dead by its parent.⁶⁹ This final detail was clearly intended to add to the horror of

⁶⁷ For the meanings of monstrous births in England: Walsham, *Providence*, 194-203; Julie Crawford, *Marvelous Protestantism: Monstrous Births in Post-Reformation England* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005); French, *Children of Wrath*, 145-56.

⁶⁸ *Eniaytos Terastios. Mirabilis Annus, or, the Year of Prodigies and Wonders ...* (London, 1661), f. A2v, 48-9.

⁶⁹ *Eniaytos Terastios*, 48-9; Maaïke van der Lugt, “Formed Fetuses and Healthy Children in Scholastic Theology, Medicine and Law,” in *Reproduction: Antiquity to the Present Day*, ed. Nick Hopwood, Rebecca Flemming, and Lauren Kassell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 174-6.

the prodigy, as monstrous births usually died of their own accord. Another example of crying in the womb followed by monstrous birth is given by Stephen Batman in his 1581 book of prodigies: “In *Rathstadium* [...] a childe was borne with hornes, whose crying and weeping was heard fourteene dayes before he was borne”.⁷⁰ Though brief, this account contrasts starkly with the Scottish “monster”. Batman’s “childe” is heard “weeping” rather than “squek”-ing (a decidedly more human noise), and his malformity is limited to horns. When this same case is cited in two natural histories by English clergymen in 1678 and 1697, the horns are left out of the story: crying in the womb had become the sole cause of wonder.⁷¹ In both of these texts, this prodigy is placed in chapters about crying in the womb that are followed by separate chapters about monstrous births, representing an increasingly categorical approach to these events.

Indeed, crying in the womb was an effective prodigy on its own, which is how it normally appears in this literature. In 1676, the naturalist Robert Plot recounted a recent event in Oxfordshire,

where there was a child cryed very audibly in its *mothers* womb sometime before the *birth*. For the performance of which action, whether there be a necessity of the *Infants* having respiration whil’st included in the *Amnion*; or whether it may be done without it? let the *Physitians* dispute: The matter of fact sufficeth me at present that there was such a thing, the people being frighted with it, and expecting some calamity should soon attend such a *Prodigie*, pernicious (forsooth) not only to the *place* where heard, but to the *State* it self.⁷²

Writing closer to the end of the seventeenth century, when such wonders were shedding some of their earlier meaning as prodigies, but still served as evidence of God’s providence, Plot is

⁷⁰ Batman’s text is a reproduction of Conrad Lycosthenes’ *Prodigiorum* (1557), though updated with more recent prodigies. Stephen Batman, *The Doome Warning All Men to the Judgemente: Wherein Are Contayned for the Most Parte all the Straunge Prodigies Hapned in the Worlde ...* (London, 1581), 237.

⁷¹ Nathaniel Wanley, *The Wonders of the Little World: Or, a General History of Man. In Six Books ...* (London, 1678), 2; William Turner, *A Compleat History of the Most Remarkable Providences, Both of Judgment and Mercy, Which Have Hapned in This Present Age* (London, 1697), Part II, 7.

⁷² Robert Plot, *The Natural History of Oxford-Shire, Being an Essay Toward the Nature History of England* (Oxford, 1676), 192-3.

somewhat condescending towards “the people” who attach “pernicious” meaning to *vagitus uterinus*. Yet it is clear that crying in the womb could still be popularly interpreted as an event which forbode greater “calamity”, before a monstrous birth took place, or without one at all. Plot alludes to physicians’ “disputes” over the foetus’s respiration in utero as a subtle way of enhancing the credibility of a phenomenon which he proclaims as a “matter of fact”. Yet he elaborates that “living in contempt of *God* and his *Laws*” is the true cause of ruin in the world (not prodigies), and that “such *vagitus* [...] portends nothing but happiness to the *Infant*, the *Mother*, and *State* it self”, as it proves the infant’s “strength” and viability.⁷³ In 1697, the clergyman William Turner gives a similar example of a “perfect Female child” born after crying in the womb with such “noise, that it was heard by the Neighbours” and drew together a whole crowd of people anticipating “what shap’d Monster [...] should be delivered”.⁷⁴ The infant’s non-monstrous arrival is far from disappointing; the surprising ordinariness of the prodigious child’s form serves only to increase the sense of wonder which this sound could evoke. Looking at crying in the womb as a distinct phenomenon from monstrous births allows us to understand how the sound of infant crying, even without the visual presence of a child, could affirm the foetus’s humanness.

In seventeenth-century scientific understandings of generation, foetal crying and monstrosity were not related. While monsters were thought to be the result of a defect in the seed or uterus, crying in the womb was essentially the result of breathing before birth. If this possibility was to be entertained, medical writers treated crying in the womb firmly as a rare pre-cursor to crying outside the womb. The French surgeon Jacques Guillemeau wrote sceptically of crying in the womb in his childbirth treatise printed in English in 1612:

IT is recorded by auncient Histories, that there have beene some Children, which have made a noise, and cast forth cries being yet in their mothers belly: and for

⁷³ Plot, *Natural History*, 192-3.

⁷⁴ Turner, *Compleat History*, Part II, 7.

*proofe heerof, they relate, that in the City of Rascat, that a child borne with two hornes, whose moanes, and lamentations were herad [sic] fourteene daies before his birth: But this is rather Prodigious then Naturall [...].*⁷⁵

Here, Guillemneau rather neatly separates the “Prodigious” from the “Naturall” capacities of the infant. He selects the popular example of the horned “child” from Stephen Batman’s 1581 book of prodigies to illustrate. In this sceptical context, the combination of crying in the womb and monstrosity in that case serves to discredit *vagitus uterinus* as altogether implausible. He continued,

*And I have often observed, that a child neither cries, nor makes any noise, neither sighes, though he be halfe come foorth, what paine or anguish soever he suffers in the passing. But as soone as he is born, and sees the light (beside the alteration of the ayre, which he finds) even very necessity, and his owne feeling, doe force and as it were wring from him cries and moanes, thereby to shew, in what need he stands of helpe. He craves and demands the succour of his owne Mother to be nourisht and fed [...].*⁷⁶

While Guillemneau holds that infants do not cry in the womb, the child he describes is hardly lacking in emotion, suffering “anguish” in the course of its birth and even “halfe come foorth” and, immediately upon encountering light and air, is poised by “his owne feeling” to cry, moan, crave, and demand succour. The Dutch physician Isbrand van Diemberbroeck, in his anatomical treatise printed in English in 1694, completely dismisses the idea that infants might cry in the womb. He condemns the “idle” and “Vulgar” sorts who fashion “Prophecy upon these feigned wonders”, but concedes that trapped gas in the mother’s guts could produce “a whining noise like the crying of an Infant”.⁷⁷

Culpeper was more open-minded, suggesting that in the event of air entering the uterus and the infant’s lungs being well-developed, “there is no hinderance but it may utter a

⁷⁵ Guillemneau, *Child-Birth*, f. Kk3r, original emphasis.

⁷⁶ Guillemneau, *Child-Birth*, f. Kk3v.

⁷⁷ Isbrand van Diemberbroeck, *The Anatomy of Human Bodies; Comprehending the Most Modern Discoveries and Curiosities in that Art ...* trans. William Salmon (London, 1694), 278-9.

voice”, if so stirred.⁷⁸ Two religious tracts of the 1690s demonstrate how the corporeality of crying in the womb was able to coexist with the shifting understanding that while this event might not forebode God’s wrath, it was nevertheless a testament to God’s existence. Writing against the perceived threats of “*Impiety and Atheism*” at the turn of the eighteenth century, in *A Demonstration of the Existence and Providence of God* (1696), the clergyman John Edwards suggests that the infant must practise its sucking in the womb, and “as it opened its Mouth to *suck*, so it may do the same to *breath*; which some have denied, but it is proved by the *Vagitus uterinus*, attested by Physicians, for a Voice supposes Air and Respiration”.⁷⁹ In *A Compleat History of the Most Remarkable Providences* (1697), William Turner easily combines bodily and prodigious explanations for crying in the womb:

[...] but some, whether through the Strength of Nature, or some premature Eruption of the Amnion, or other Accident in the Womb, or an extraordinary Sagacity in provident Nature, and foresight of the Evils to come, Anticipate their time, and are heard to Cry [...].⁸⁰

In these medical texts and natural histories, there is a clear sense that foetal crying is the “premature” “voice” of a child soon to be breathing and crying aloud as a matter of course.

Both foetal and infant crying were heard to signify the misery of man. In the preface to a chapter on crying in the womb in *Wonders of the Little World* (1678), a study of man “[i]n respect of his *Body, Senses, Passions, Affections*”, the clergyman Nathaniel Wanley elaborates:

[...] there are some who seem even to anticipate their birth-right: and as if the World was not wide enough to afford them their full measure of sorrow: they begin their lamentations in the Womb. Or whether it is that provident Nature would have them to practise there in the dark, what they shall afterwards seldome want occasion for so long as they enjoy the light.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Culpeper, *Directory for Midwives*, 168-9.

⁷⁹ John Edwards, *A Demonstration of the Existence and Providence of God, from the Contemplation of the Visible Structure of the Greater and the Lesser World* (London, 1696), 111, original emphasis.

⁸⁰ Turner, *Compleat History*, Part II, 7, original emphasis.

⁸¹ Wanley, *Wonders*, 1.

Here, crying in the womb is synonymous with the “lamentations” of “sorrow” that the infant will experience in the world. In the idea that this was “practise [...] there in the dark”, there is a clear line of emotional continuity from the later-term foetus to the newborn infant. The clergyman Sampson Price preached that the newborn’s first cry was of the misery inherited with original sin: “his first song is the *Lamentation* of a sinner, weeping and sobbing”.⁸² Although Price despairs of sin and the unreasonableness of infancy, he also described infant crying as an expression of the human child’s immediate need for maternal “nourishment” and “tenderly carefull and fearefull” treatment.⁸³ Crying in the womb, heard as congruous with the newborn infant’s solicitation for care, could be the premature demanding of an ordinary, well-formed child, already endowed with sin and ready upon its birth for bodily and spiritual care.

Hearing the unborn

Hearing crying in the womb as the extraordinary emotional expression of the unborn infant was an affective experience, invested with the power to move the hearer to the feeling of wonder and knowledge in God.⁸⁴ Anna French has likened the articulate, didactic speeches of older child prophets to “sermonising”, in the sense that the prophets’ words “reflect[...] and adopt[...] motifs, messages and lessons which were similar to those congregations received from the minister at the altar”.⁸⁵ In prodigious narratives of crying in the womb, the sensory flashpoints of sounding and hearing infants’ prelingual voices likewise echo the way that sermons were understood to operate as affective religious speech that imparted God’s Word to the faithful via the senses. In her work on early modern musical physiology, Bettina

⁸² Sampson Price, *The Two Twins of Birth and Death. A Sermon Preached in Christs Church in London, the 5. of September. 1624* (London, 1624), 8.

⁸³ Price, *Two Twins*, 8-9.

⁸⁴ On prodigies and wonder: Daston and Park, *Wonders* 181-99; Marnie Hughes-Warrington, *History as Wonder: Beginning with Historiography* (London: Routledge, 2019).

⁸⁵ French, *Children of Wrath*, 132.

Varwig describes the human voice as “seeping out of a humoral, spiritous body-soul, voice carried that body’s attributes with it and transferred them to the surrounding porous body-souls of those listening”.⁸⁶ By the miraculous transmission of human emotion, crying in the womb was a moment in which the foetus’s relational personhood was configured. In this moment, the sounder’s unseen “body-soul” presence can be heard; the hearer can know the foetus as an ensouled human person and feel the effects of its godly communication.

Early modern worship was multisensory, yet English Protestants placed especially high value on hearing.⁸⁷ There was, increasingly, “a *proper* way to hear” in order to be truly moved by the Word: an “open” ear was essential.⁸⁸ While seventeenth-century English Protestants worked to finely hone the art of hearing, preachers worked to deliberately move their hearers to godly emotional ends, by expressing godly emotion themselves.⁸⁹ And while Calvinist theology, strictly speaking, denied that godly sensing and feeling could assure one that they were among the elect (a truth known only to God), Matthew Milner has argued that “many Protestants sought to see spiritual sensations as proof of true faith”.⁹⁰ Receiving the Word of God through spoken sermons was the privileged method for inducing these sensations, but narrative accounts of crying in the womb show how this non-verbal sound could function in a similarly vital way.

⁸⁶ Bettina Varwig, *Music in the Flesh: An Early Modern Musical Physiology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2023), 63.

⁸⁷ Arnold Hunt, *The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and Their Audiences, 1590-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Wietse de Boer and Christine Göttler, "Introduction: The Sacred and the Senses in an Age of Reform," in *Religion and the senses in early modern Europe*, ed. Wietse de Boer and Christine Göttler (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 97-103; Matthew Milner, "The Senses in Religion: Towards the Reformation of the Senses," in *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Renaissance*, ed. Herman W. Roodenburg (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).

⁸⁸ Jennifer Rae McDermott, "'The Melodie of Heaven': Sermonizing the Open Ear in Early Modern England," in *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Wietse de Boer and Christine Göttler (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 183.

⁸⁹ Hunt, *Art of Hearing*; Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 352.

⁹⁰ Milner, "Senses in Religion," 100-1.

Wanley recounted the case of a Cheshire noblewoman who, seven-months pregnant and sitting in her dining room, suddenly became “sensible of an extraordinary stirring in her belly” which lifted her clothes and was followed by “a voice”.⁹¹ None of the hearers present (including this woman, her husband, their chaplain, and “divers others”) anticipated that this voice belonged to the foetus in her womb, but on a second sounding “perceiv’d” the movement of her belly, “and withal heard a cry”:

While they were amaz’d at what had pass’d; and were discoursing together of this prodigy: All that had before happened, did a third time so manifestly appear, that (being now become the more attentive) they doubted not, but that the cry came from her Womb: the Girl that was so loquacious in the Womb of her Mother, doth yet live, and is likely enough so to continue.⁹²

In this narrative, the dinner company are elevated by degrees to wondrous, open-eared hearers; aided by the visual clue of the moving belly and repetition, they proceed from hearing, to doubt, amazement, discourse, attentiveness and, finally, assurance. The foetus, in turn, becomes “the Girl”, preceded by her “loquacious[ness] in the Womb”, she is duly confirmed to be a living and viable child upon her birth. This emotional sequence, culminating in “doubt[ing] not”, mirrored the way that hearing a sermon could bring the Protestant hearer to the feeling of assurance, especially in response to the amazing working of divine wrath on earth.⁹³

In a lengthy account of crying in the womb, printed in an English pamphlet in 1599 (adapted from a Dutch pamphlet of the same year), a “yong child” was heard “to crye or weepe” in the womb before being born on New Year’s Eve in the Dutch city of Purmerend,

⁹¹ Wanley, *Wonders*, 1-2; The seventh and ninth months were considered safest for birth: Rüff, *Expert Midwife*, 64-5.

⁹² Wanley, *Wonders*, 2.

⁹³ Hunt, *Art of Hearing*, 347-8; Ryrie, *Being Protestant*, 316-62; To see this emotional sequence in response to plague (another kind of prodigy): Olivia Formby, ““Woe unto us”: Divine Wrath and Godly Sorrow in an English Plague Sermon (1637),” *The Seventeenth Century* (2022): 357-8.

“not monstrous nor mishapen”.⁹⁴ The sound prompted his father to ask “what it was that cried and looking about, thought that one of their other children had beene there” (though their children were playing in the church next door). When the sound was “perfectly” repeated, “hee demaunded againe what was that which cried? Surelie (answered his wife) it is the fruite of my body: they both remaining heerat greatly amazed”.⁹⁵ Though well-formed at birth, the newborn grew ill and, shortly before his death, “cast[...] up his eyes to heaven, and thrusting out his armes and fists (through anguish)” spoke the phrase “O my God” three times, “with such distinction” that his parents and two other women present testified that these sounded like the words of a child of ten years.⁹⁶ This narrative, which combines crying in the womb with miraculous newborn speech, is described in the pamphlet’s preface as both a “token” and a “miracle”. Like “monstrous birthes, and strange marvailous things”, it portended “great anguish and distresse which shall happen amongst men [...] which ought to bee a warning unto us to leave our wickednesse, to turne and convert our selves [...]”.⁹⁷ Thus the infant’s “anguish” was a mirror of the “great anguish” yet to come. As a prodigy, this event was akin to monstrous births, but the warning provided by the Purmerend infant is ultimately humanising and acts as proof of his soul, perhaps even his salvation. The Protestant piety of the boy’s parents, as “vertuous” members of the “reformed” Church, is emphasised in the text.⁹⁸ Upon their child’s death, they find “courage” and “comfort” in Psalm 8:2: “That Gods might and power is disclosed by the mouthes of sucking Babes”.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ *A Strange and Miraculous Accident Happened in the Cittie of Purmerent ... Of a Yong Child Which Was Heard to Cry in the Mothers Wombe Before it Was Borne ...* (London, 1599), title page, 4-5; A copy of the original Dutch pamphlet is held in the Stadsarchief Rotterdam: *Een Mirakel ende Geschiedenisse, Hoe dat Binnen de Stadt Purmurent Dichte op de Kercke, op Nieuwe Jaers Avont ...* (Antwerp, 1599).

Erica Fudge discusses this case as “strange” example of a child performing rational speech and does not discuss the crying in the womb: Fudge, *Brutal Reasoning*, 44-5.

⁹⁵ *Strange and Miraculous* 4-5.

⁹⁶ *Strange and Miraculous* 5-6.

⁹⁷ *Strange and Miraculous* 3.

⁹⁸ *Strange and Miraculous* 4.

⁹⁹ *Strange and Miraculous* 7.

Additional spiritual authority is derived from the very “distinction” of the infant’s speech shortly after its birth; unlike the Scottish monster whose speech is portrayed as unnatural, the speech of this “not monstrous” child, which was “more over so lowde, that [it] might have beene heard to the Church” next door, is perceived as miraculous “truthe”.¹⁰⁰ This child, far from a shameful monster, offers something of a conversion narrative for his grieving parents. The wider religious and political conclusion of this narrative as the construction of a foetal personhood worthy of infant baptism is spelled out in the very last sentence of the pamphlet: “By this may be seene, that the little Babes also have the holy Ghost, although some (and especially the Anabaptists) say no, which now appeeres to the contrarie”.¹⁰¹ The English adaptation of this apparently anti-Anabaptist pamphlet at the height of theological uncertainty surrounding infant baptism in England, attests to the powerful role which the foetus’s voice and emotionality could play in negotiating this uncertainty.

The sound of crying in the womb commonly caused fright and amazement, it gained the attention of parents, ministers, physicians, and neighbours, and moved them – to flee or, more commonly, to gather and to hear as impromptu congregations and scientific observers. In prodigious accounts, the responses of hearers to the emotional unborn infant were performative and acted as a model for the reader’s own response to the text: be affrighted, be amazed, be converted by the Word and power of God. Although crying in the womb could be accompanied by the felt and sometimes even seen movement of the foetus, it was overwhelmingly experienced by others through the sense of hearing. This sound was simultaneously miraculous and deeply familiar. Derham attested that, being “long used to

For Calvin’s interpretation of Psalm 8:2, as literally meaning young infants “have tongues eloquent ynough to preache his glory”, see: Barbara Pitkin, “The Heritage of the Lord’: Children in the Theology of John Calvin,” in *The Child in Christian Thought*, ed. Marcia J. Bunge (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2001), 165-6; Jean Calvin, *The Institution of Christian Religion* (London, 1561), f. 6r-v.

¹⁰⁰ *Strange and Miraculous* 6. Ten was the age when an individual’s religious experience could be taken more seriously by early modern Protestants: Alec Ryrie, “Protestants,” in *Early Modern Childhood: An Introduction*, ed. Anna French (London: Routledge, 2020), 121-4.

¹⁰¹ *Strange and Miraculous* 7.

Children”, hearers of the 1709 case did “with the greatest Assurance affirm it to have been manifest Crying, as ever they heard from a Born-Infant, and nothing like any Noise of Wind, or the Guts”.¹⁰² And, like the cry of the “Born-Infant”, this noise was to be attended to. As a prodigy foreboding divine wrath, and even as an extraordinary sign of “provident Nature”, the effects of crying in the womb, the ability for these emotional sounds to convey humanness and personhood, was to be recorded and proliferated.

Conclusion

In early modern England, not every prodigious infant was a monster and most ordinary infants would not be heard until the moment of birth. Historians have emphasised that the unseen nature of the womb could harbour terrible uncertainties, even after the sensations of quickening. Tracing the extraordinary phenomenon of crying in the womb tells us that the foetus could be imagined to occasionally assure hearers of the presence of its human body and soul, through snatches of sound. The ability for these foetuses to communicate and transmit feelings of their closeness to and knowledge of God suggests the potential for a much more powerful and heard role for ordinary infants than we have previously considered. That crying in the womb – an emotional expression – could be used to prove that foetuses possessed a rational soul and were worthy of infant baptism suggests that sounding human was of vital importance to Protestant personhood, and that non-verbal sounds could effectively convey this human voice. Moving beyond these miraculous moments to more broader conclusions, it tells us that early moderns could consider ordinary foetuses to be capable of emotion in the womb and that ordinary infants’ preverbal sounds could be meaningful emotional expressions. These insights can enliven studies of pregnancy and childhood in all eras with new questions: Do infants’ emotions make them human? When do

¹⁰² Derham, "Short Dissertation," 491-2.

we sound human? How were these sounds heard, and by whom, and for what political purposes? I venture that the definition of “relational and subjective” foetal personhood is just as relevant in the early modern past as it is today, and that sensing (or indeed failing to sense) the foetus and their emotions was essential to the process by which that relationality and subjectivity were constructed. In early modern England, this sensing could lead to disparate ends, fostering fear, doubt, and assurance, all in turn, that what grew in the womb might be a heartily-sobbing child, a squeaking monster, or maybe just trapped gas.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was funded by a Cambridge Australia Poynton International Scholarship and funding from the Faculty of History, University of Cambridge. Versions of this paper were presented at the *Religion, Emotion and the Body* symposium at Stockholm University in April 2022 and at the *Early Modern British and Irish History* seminar series at the University of Cambridge in February 2024, and it benefitted from thoughtful questions and comments from hearers on both occasions. Thank you to the anonymous reviewers for their time and for their generous feedback. I am especially grateful to my supervisor Alex Walsham for her feedback on drafts and her encouragement.

References

Primary Sources

- Aristoteles Master-Piece, or the Secrets of Generation Displayed in All the Parts Thereof.* London, 1684.
- Batman, Stephen. *The Doome Warning All Men to the Judgemente: Wherein Are Contayned for the Most Parte All the Straunge Prodigies Hapned in the Worlde ...* London, 1581.
- Bishop, John. *Beautifull Blossomes, Gathered by John Byshop, from the Best Trees of All Kyndes, Divine, Philosophicall, Astronomicall, Cosmographical, Historical, & Humane.* London, 1577.
- BL. Add Ms 35331, Diary of Walter Yonge.
- Blair, Robert G. "Vagitus Uterinus: Crying in Utero." *The Lancet* 286, no. 7423 (1965): 1164-5.
- Bright, Timothie. *A Treatise of Melancholie.* London, 1586.
- Calvin, Jean. *The Institution of Christian Religion.* London, 1561.
- Cotton, John. *The Grounds and Ends of the Baptisme of the Children of the Faithfull.* London, 1646.
- Crooke, Helkiah. *Mikrokosmographia: A Description of the Body of Man ...* London, 1615.
- Culpeper, Nicholas. *Culpeper's Directory for Midwives: Or, a Guide for Women.* London, 1676.
- Denne, Henry. *Seven Arguments to Prove, That in Order of Working God Doth Justifie His Elect, before They Do Actually Believe.* London, 1643.
- Derham, William. "Part of a Letter from the Reverend Mr. W. Derham, F. R. S. To Dr. Hans Sloane, R. S. Sec. Giving an Account of a Child's Crying in the Womb." *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* 26 (1708-9): 485-6.
- . "A Short Dissertation Concerning the Child's Crying in the Womb." *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* 26 (1708-9): 487-92.
- Edwards, John. *A Demonstration of the Existence and Providence of God, from the Contemplation of the Visible Structure of the Greater and the Lesser World.* London, 1696.
- Een Mirakel Ende Geschiedenisse, Hoe Dat Binnen De Stadt Purmurent Dichte Op De Kercke, Op Nieuwe Jaers Avont ...* Antwerp, 1599.
- Eniaytos Terastios. Mirabilis Annus, or, the Year of Prodigies and Wonders ...* London, 1661.
- Gadbury, John. *Natura Prodigiorum: Or, a Discourse Touching the Nature of Prodigies ...* London, 1660.
- Guillemeau, Jacques. *Child-Birth, or, the Happy Deliverie of Women. Wherin Is Set Downe the Gouvernment of Women ... To Which Is Added, a Treatise of the Diseases of Infants* London, 1612.
- Hill, William. *The Infancie of the Soule: Or, the Soule of an Infant ...* London, 1605.
- Livius, Titus. *The History of Rome: Books Nine to Twenty-Six.* Translated by D. Spillan and Cyrus Edmonds. 1868.
- Malebranche, Nicolas. *Father Malebranche His Treatise Concerning the Search after Truth.* Translated by T. Taylor. 2nd ed. London, 1700.
- Newcome, Henry. *The Compleat Mother. Or an Earnest Perswasive to All Mothers (Especially Those of Rank and Quality) to Nurse Their Own Children.* London, 1695.
- Paré, Ambroise. *The Workes of That Famous Chirurgion Ambrose Parey. Translated out of Latine and Compared with the French.* Translated by Thomas Johnson. London, 1634.

- Parsons, Bartholomew. *The First Fruits of the Gentiles. In Three Sermons Preached in the Cathedrall Church at Sarum*. London, 1618.
- Plot, Robert. *The Natural History of Oxford-Shire, Being an Essay toward the Nature History of England*. Oxford, 1676.
- Price, Sampson. *The Two Twins of Birth and Death. A Sermon Preached in Christs Church in London, the 5. Of September. 1624*. London, 1624.
- Rüff, Jakob. *The Expert Midwife, or an Excellent and Most Necessary Treatise of the Generation and Birth of Man*. London, 1637.
- Russell, P. M. G. "Vagitus Uterinus: Crying in Utero." *The Lancet* 269, no. 6969 (1957): 137-8.
- Sibscota, George. *The Deaf and Dumb Man's Discourse. Or a Treatise Concerning Those That Are Born Deaf and Dumb, Containing a Discovery of Their Knowledge or Understanding ...* London, 1670.
- A Strange and Miraculous Accident Happened in the Cittie of Purmerent ... Of a Yong Child Which Was Heard to Cry in the Mothers Wombe before It Was Borne ...* London, 1599.
- Turner, William. *A Compleat History of the Most Remarkable Providences, Both of Judgment and Mercy, Which Have Hapned in This Present Age*. London, 1697.
- van Diemerbroeck, Isbrand. *The Anatomy of Human Bodies; Comprehending the Most Modern Discoveries and Curiosities in That Art ...* Translated by William Salmon. London, 1694.
- Wanley, Nathaniel. *The Wonders of the Little World: Or, a General History of Man. In Six Books ...* London, 1678.

Secondary Sources

- Astbury, Leah. "'Ordering the Infant': Caring for Newborns in Early Modern England." In *Conserving Health in Early Modern Culture: Bodies and Environments in Italy and England*, edited by Sandra Cavallo and Tessa Storey, 80-103. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017.
- Boddice, Rob, and Mark Smith. *Emotion, Sense, Experience*. Cambridge Elements in Histories of Emotions and the Senses. Edited by Jan Plamper. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.
- Brundin, Abigail, Deborah Howard, and Mary Laven. *The Sacred Home in Renaissance Italy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Butler, Sara M. "Pleading the Belly: A Sparing Plea? Pregnant Convicts and the Courts in Medieval England." In *Crossing Borders: Boundaries and Margins in Medieval and Early Modern Britain*, edited by Sara M. Butler and K. J. Kesselring, 131-52. Leiden: Brill, 2018.
- Christopoulos, John. *Abortion in Early Modern Italy*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2021.
- Clark, Stuart. *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Connell, Sophia M. "Animal Cognition in Aristotle." In *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Biology*, edited by Sophia M. Connell, 195-210. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021.
- Crawford, Julie. *Marvelous Protestantism: Monstrous Births in Post-Reformation England*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.
- Crawford, Patricia. *Blood, Bodies and Families in Early Modern England*. London: Routledge, 2004.

- Cressy, David. *Birth, Marriage, and Death: Ritual, Religion and the Life-Cycle in Tudor and Stuart England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Daston, Lorraine, and Katharine Park. *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750*. New York: Zone Books, 1998.
- de Boer, Wietse, and Christine Göttler. "Introduction: The Sacred and the Senses in an Age of Reform." In *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Wietse de Boer and Christine Göttler, 1-13. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- Dixon, C. Scott. "The Radicals." In *The Oxford Handbook of the Protestant Reformations*, edited by Ulinka Rublack, 190-213. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Donley, Greer, and Jill Wieber Lens. "Abortion, Pregnancy Loss, & Subjective Fetal Personhood." *Vanderbilt Law Review* 75, no. 6 (2022): 1649-727.
- Duden, Barbara. *Disembodying Women: Perspectives on Pregnancy and the Unborn*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993.
- Few, Martha, Zeb Tortorici, and Adam Warren. "Introduction: Postmortem Cesareans and Pedro José De Arrese's Guatemalan Treatise in Historical Context." In *Baptism through Incision: The Postmortem Cesarean Operation in the Spanish Empire*, edited by Martha Few, Zeb Tortorici and Adam Warren, 1-38. University Park, Pennsylvania: The University of Pennsylvania State University Press, 2020.
- Formby, Olivia. "'Woe Unto Us': Divine Wrath and Godly Sorrow in an English Plague Sermon (1637)." *The Seventeenth Century* (2022): 351-70.
- Freidenfelds, Lara. *The Myth of the Perfect Pregnancy: A History of Miscarriage in America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- French, Anna. *Children of Wrath: Possession, Prophecy and the Young in Early Modern England*. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2015.
- . "Disputed Words and Disputed Meaning: The Reformation of Baptism, Infant Limbo and Child Salvation in Early Modern England." In *Sin and Salvation in Reformation England*, edited by Jonathan Willis, 157-72. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2015.
- Fudge, Erica. *Brutal Reasoning: Animals, Rationality, and Humanity in Early Modern England*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2006.
- . "Learning to Laugh: Children and Being Human in Early Modern Thought." In *Childhood and Children's Books in Early Modern Europe, 1550-1800*, edited by Andrea Immel and Michael Witmore, 19-40. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Gallagher, HW. "Three Pregnancies in Iron-Age Ireland: Crying in the Womb, Hydramnios and Caesarean Section." *The Ulster Medical Journal* 74, no. 1 (2005): 68-9.
- Gowing, Laura. *Common Bodies: Women, Touch and Power in Seventeenth-Century England*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.
- Huet, Marie-Helene. *Monstrous Imagination*. Cambridge, Massachusetts Harvard University Press, 1993.
- Hughes-Warrington, Marnie. *History as Wonder: Beginning with Historiography*. London: Routledge, 2019.
- Hunt, Arnold. *The Art of Hearing: English Preachers and Their Audiences, 1590-1640*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Klaeren, George A. "Sacred Embryology: Intrauterine Baptisms and the Negotiation of Theology and Health Sciences across the Eighteenth-Century Spanish Empire." In *Health and Healing in the Early Modern Iberian World*, edited by Margaret E. Boyle and Sarah E. Owens, 219-40. Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2021.
- Loewenstein, David. *Treacherous Faith: The Specter of Heresy in Early Modern English Literature and Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

- Lupton, Deborah. *The Social Worlds of the Unborn*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.
- Maddern, Philippa, and Stephanie Tarbin. "Life Cycle." In *A Cultural History of Childhood and Family in the Early Modern Age*, edited by Sandra Cavallo and Silvia Evangelisti, 113-34. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010.
- McClive, Cathy. "The Hidden Truths of the Belly: The Uncertainties of Pregnancy in Early Modern Europe." *Social History of Medicine* 15, no. 2 (2002): 209-27.
- McClive, Cathy, and Helen King. "When Is a Foetus Not a Foetus? Diagnosing False Conceptions in Early Modern France." In *L'embryon Humain a Travers L'histoire: Images, Savoirs Et Rites*, edited by Véronique Dasen, 223-38. Gollion: Infolio, 2007.
- McDermott, Jennifer Rae. "'The Melodie of Heaven': Sermonizing the Open Ear in Early Modern England." In *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Wietse de Boer and Christine Göttler, 177-97. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- Milner, Matthew. "The Senses in Religion: Towards the Reformation of the Senses." In *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Renaissance*, edited by Herman W. Roodenburg, 87-106. London: Bloomsbury, 2014.
- Newton, Hannah. *The Sick Child in Early Modern England, 1580-1720*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Nutton, Vivian. "The Anatomy of the Soul in Early Renaissance Medicine." In *The Human Embryo: Aristotle and the Arabic and European Traditions*, edited by G. R. Dunstan, 136-57. Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1990.
- Oates, Rosamund. "Speaking in Hands: Early Modern Preaching and Signed Languages for the Deaf." *Past & Present*, no. 256 (2022): 49-85.
- Oren-Magidor, Daphna. "Conception, Pregnancy and Childbirth." In *Early Modern Childhood: An Introduction*, edited by Anna French, 57-73. London: Routledge, 2020.
- Pitkin, Barbara. "'The Heritage of the Lord': Children in the Theology of John Calvin." In *The Child in Christian Thought*, edited by Marcia J. Bunge. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2001.
- Plamper, Jan. "The History of Emotions: An Interview with William Reddy, Barbara Rosenwein, and Peter Stearns." *History and Theory* 49 (2010): 237-65.
- Pollock, Linda A. *Forgotten Shildren: Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Roodenburg, Herman W. "The Body in the Reformations." In *The Oxford Handbook of the Protestant Reformations*, edited by Ulinka Rublack. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- . "The Maternal Imagination: The Fears of Pregnant Women in Seventeenth-Century Holland." *Journal of Social History* 21, no. 4 (1988): 701-16.
- Rosenwein, Barbara H. *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2006.
- . *Generations of Feeling: A History of Emotions, 600-1700*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016.
- Rublack, Ulinka. "Fluxes: The Early Modern Body and the Emotions." trans. Pamela Selwyn. *History Workshop Journal*, no. 53 (2002): 1-16.
- . "Pregnancy, Childbirth and the Female Body in Early Modern Germany." *Past & Present* 150, no. 1 (1996): 84-110.
- Ryder, George H. "Vagitus Uterinus." *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* 46, no. 6 (1943): 867-72.
- Ryrie, Alec. *Being Protestant in Reformation Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

- . "Facing Childhood Death in English Protestant Spirituality." In *Death, Emotion and Childhood in Premodern Europe*, edited by Katie Barclay, Kimberley Reynolds and Ciara Rawnsley, 109-28. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
- . "Protestants." In *Early Modern Childhood: An Introduction*, edited by Anna French, 121-39. London: Routledge, 2020.
- Spivack, Carla. "To 'Bring Down the Flowers': The Cultural Context of Abortion Law in Early Modern England." *William and Mary Quarterly* 107 (2007): 107-51.
- Stolberg, Michael. "Emotions and the Body in Early Modern Medicine." *Emotion Review* 11, no. 2 (2019): 113-22.
- Sutton, John. "Soul and Body." In *The Oxford Handbook of British Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century*, edited by Peter R. Anstey, 285-307. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Thomas, Keith. "Age and Authority in Early Modern England." *Proceedings of the British Academy* 62, 1976 (1976): 205-48.
- . *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England, 1500-1800*. London: Allen Lane, 1983.
- van der Lugt, Maaïke. "Formed Fetuses and Healthy Children in Scholastic Theology, Medicine and Law." In *Reproduction: Antiquity to the Present Day*, edited by Nick Hopwood, Rebecca Flemming and Lauren Kassell, 167-80. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.
- van Manen, Michael A. "The First Cry of the Child." *Qualitative Health Research* 27, no. 7 (2017): 1069-76.
- Varwig, Bettina. *Music in the Flesh: An Early Modern Musical Physiology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2023.
- Walker, Garthine. "Child-Killing and Emotion in Early Modern England and Wales." In *Death, Emotion and Childhood in Premodern Europe*, edited by Katie Barclay, Kimberley Reynolds and Ciara Rawnsley, 151-72. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.
- Walsham, Alexandra. "'Out of the Mouths of Babes and Sucklings': Prophecy, Puritanism, and Childhood in Elizabeth Suffolk." In *The Church and Childhood: Papers Read at the 1993 Summer Meeting and the 1994 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, edited by Diana Wood, 285-99. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994.
- . *Providence in Early Modern England*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Whiteley, Rebecca. *Birth Figures: Early Modern Prints and the Pregnant Body*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2023.