

As was normal under the *ancien régime*, the peasant family in Montailou was a large one. Mengarde and Pons Clergue had four sons and at least two daughters known to us. Guillemette Belot had four sons and two daughters. Guillaume and Guillemette Benet had at least two sons and three daughters. Raymond Baille had four sons, but no daughter is mentioned. Pierre and Mengarde Maurs had four sons and one daughter. There were four Marty brothers. Alazais and Raymond Maury had six sons and at least two daughters.

There were smaller families. Bernard and Gauzia Clergue had only two known children, a son and a daughter. Two couples, Guillemette and Raymond Maurs and Bernard and Guillemette Maurs, had two sons each, as well, probably, as daughters unknown to us in name or number. From the information available, eighteen couples emerge who were in the process of completing, or had completed, their family in the demographic period 1280-1324, the time roughly covered by the Fournier Register. These eighteen families, complete and incomplete, gave birth to a minimum of forty-two boys and twenty girls. The number of girls is clearly under-estimated or under-recorded. The figure for boys certainly does not take into account losses from infant mortality, the deaths which occurred between birth and the end of the first year of life. It also leaves out an indeterminable fraction of juvenile mortality, especially between one and five years of age. Even so, this gives us a mean of 2.3 boys per couple. So, taking into account various imponderables, it is reasonable to assume 4.5 legitimate births, including boys and girls, per family, complete or incomplete,¹ a fertility rate equal

1 The couples in question here are: Pons Clergue and Mengarde (four boys, two girls: Guillaume, Bernard, Pierre, Raymond, Esclarmonde, Guillemette); a couple whose head, unrefereed to elsewhere, was called Bar (three sons and two daughters: Pierre, Raymond, Guillaume, Mengarde, Guillemette; see i.418); Bernard Rives and Alazais (one son, two daughters: Pons, Raymond and Guillemette, who married one of the Clergues); Pons Azéma and Alazais (one son: Raymond); Pierre Azéma and Guillemette (one son: Raymond); Bernard Clergue (the *bayle's* namesake) and Gauzia (one boy, one girl: Raymond, Esclarmonde); Bernard Clergue, *bayle* of Montailou, and Raymond (no children); Belot senior (Christian name unknown) and Guillemette (four sons, two daughters: Raymond, Guillaume, Bernard, Arnaud, Raymond and, according to i.371, Alazais); Guillaume Benet and Guillemette (two

to that of the proud inhabitants of Beauvais in modern times. The illegitimacy rate in Montailou was higher.

One explanation of the size of Montailou families is the early age at which girls married. Moreover our figures are chiefly concerned with the Cathar and endogamous group of big farming families, allied among themselves, which dominated Montailou around 1300. For reasons which are perhaps fortuitous, the few Catholic families in the village, for example the Azémas, recorded fewer children and fewer marriages than the heretics.

There were limits to this fecundity. The richest family, the Clergues, in Pierre and Bernard's generation, seem to have practised certain kinds of birth control (magical herbs, or perhaps *cotus interruptus*). Pons Clergue's many sons left several bastards but no legitimate child, though there were other Clergues in the village to carry on the name. As for the lower ranks, the shepherds tended not to get married. More generally, the last generation with which we are concerned, that which married between the round-up of 1308 and the interrogations of 1320-25, was greatly disturbed. Many people were put in prison and the circumstances may have led some couples to practise abstinence or contraception. At all events, during the decade beginning in 1310, which

sons, four daughters: Raymond, Bernard, Alazais, Montagne; and, according to i.400, Gaillarde and Esclarmonde); Raymond Baille and X (four sons: Pierre, Jacques, Raymond, Arnaud); Vital Baille and Esclarmonde (one son: Jacques); Pierre Maurs and Mengarde (four sons and one daughter: Arnaud, Guillaume, Raymond, Pierre, Guillemette); Raymond Maurs and Guillemette (two sons: Pierre and Bernard); Bernard Maurs and Guillemette (two sons: Raymond and Pierre); the four Marty brothers, the names of whose mother and father are unknown: Guillaume, Arnaud, Bernard and Jean; X Testanière and Alazais (one son and one daughter: Prades and Vuissane); Raymond Maury and Alazais (six sons and two daughters: Guillaume, Pierre, Jean, Arnaud, Raymond, Bernard, Guillemette and Raymond); Jean Guilhabert and Allemande (one son and three daughters: Guillaume, Alazais, Sybille and Guillemette, according to i.403, ii.256 and ii.482 and 484). I have left out the very old groups, like those of Pons and Guillaume Clergue, which were already decimated by death, not only among infants and children but also among adults and elderly people. I have also left out very young couples only a small part of whose procreative life fell within the last years of the Fournier Register; moreover, these were greatly disturbed by the Inquisition. Finally, I have left out the wives who were widowed early and took refuge in Catalonia. It goes without saying that the records we are dealing with have only a very indirect and unintended demographic value.

declined.

Between 1280 and 1305, however, there was in Montailou, as elsewhere, a baby boom. Large groups of two brothers or even four all living together were very common (i.193, 203). A high birth rate was taken for granted. If you lost one child and were not too old, it was very likely that you would have more and these, according to a far-fetched Cathar interpretation of metempsychosis, might be the means of restoring to a mother the souls of her previously lost children (i.203).

My fellow-sponsor, Alazaïs Munier, says Guillaume Austatz, bayle of Orniolac, was sad, in a short time she had lost all her four sons. Seeing her desolate, I asked her the cause.

'How could I be other than unhappy,' she asked, 'after having lost four fine children in so short a time?'

'Don't be upset,' I said to her, 'you will get them back again.'

'Yes, in Paradise!'

'No, you will get them back again in this world. For you are still young. You will be pregnant again. The soul of one of your dead children will enter into the new foetus. And so on!'

We see that Guillaume Austatz did not think it strange that a woman should have eight pregnancies in all.

The countrymen of this period were well aware of the population pressure of the 1300s, resulting from, among other things, the high fertility rates discussed above. *Where, it was asked (i.191), would there be room to put all the souls of all the men who are dead and of all those who are still alive? At that rate the world would be full of souls! The entire space between the city of Toulouse and the Mérens Pass would not be enough to hold them all! Fortunately, explained Guillaume Austatz, God had found a simple remedy. Every soul was used several times. It emerged from a human body which had just died, and entered almost immediately into another. And so on.*

In theory the Cathar dogma professed by many of the people of Montailou, though little known to them in detail, was hostile to marriage and procreation. The most sophisticated Cathar peasants, and *parfaits* or pseudo-*parfaits* like Béliaste, were acquainted with this point. Béliaste himself (ii.48), who wanted *through virginity to transport the seed of this world into the next*, would not have *any man join himself carnally to a woman; nor would I have sons or daughters born of them. For*

gathered together [in heaven]. That is what I should like. Similarly, we have seen Pierre Clergue of Montailou making use of contraception, perhaps magical. But how many people in the village of the yellow cross were capable of such refinements? In any case, the duty of barrenness was incumbent only on the goodmen, not on mere 'believers'. So the peasants of Montailou, even when they were sympathetic to heresy, continued to produce numerous children. There was enough land, especially pasture, to provide them with employment when they grew up. Moreover, Catalonia, which as Béliaste said (ii.42) *lacked neither pastures nor mountains for the sheep*, welcomed surplus youth from Montailou with open arms. They easily found jobs there as shepherds and muleteers. In these circumstances, why worry? A *domus* rich in children was a *domus* rich in manpower; in other words, rich, pure and simple. This explains the large number of sons produced by the big farming families of Montailou – the Belots, the Maurys, the Martys and so on. Only the last generation of Clergues, wealthy enough not to have to descend to manual labour, were not interested in producing a large number of workers. So, both in theory and in practice, they could afford views favourable to contraception and hostile to marriage.

The large number of children produced by most Montailou families were not immediately profitable. First they had to be brought up, fed and, to begin with, suckled.¹ In rural circles it was rare to put a child out to nurse. Wet-nurses were employed only by the well-off nobility: one of the ladies of Chateaufort, who joined the heretics, entrusted her child to a wet-nurse. At one stage of her career a peasant girl might quite naturally become a wet-nurse to noble infants: Rousse Gonaud, a girl from the mountains, was first servant maid to a nobleman, then wet-nurse to the wife of another nobleman. Betweenwhiles she must have been made pregnant. Subsequently she became the mistress of a village *bayle*, with whom she lived. She ended up as the lawful wife of a farmer.²

In Montailou itself, as far as we know, wet-nurses were only resorted

¹ There is virtually no information on natal and pre-natal practices in Montailou. Recovery from childbirth seems to have been accompanied by a ceremony in the local shrine to Mary (i.223). Noble families had long been using cradles (i.221).

² iii.278. All Rousse Gonaud's career was set in pro-heretical circles.

servants. As we have seen, Raymond Arsen transferred her baby from one country wet-nurse to another before going to take up employment at the Belots'. There she from time to time looked after a child of one of the Belot daughters.¹ Anyhow the commercial demand for milk was not very great in Montallou, and might sometimes be exceeded by supply. One day in about the year 1302, around Easter, Alazaïs Rives went to see Brune Pourcel, a poor, rather stupid bastard girl already referred to (i.382): *Alazaïs told me to take my son Raymond to her house. I was nursing him at that time, and he was about half a year old.*

'In my ostal,' said Alazaïs, 'there is a woman from Razès who has too much milk...'

'Never,' I answered. 'Her milk would be bad for my son.'

Finally, giving way to my neighbour's insistence, I took my son to her house and there, indeed, I found a woman from Razès: she was sitting warming herself by the fire.

But apart from such special cases, it was usual for mothers to nurse their own babies in Montallou, as in similar villages. This was true even among the richest farming families. The nursing period might be quite long. Perhaps children were not weaned until after they were two years old as with some peasant children in modern times. Sybille Pierre was the wife of a rich arable and sheep-farmer, and her son was still being fed at the breast at the age of *one or two years* (ii.17). Breast-feeding produced temporary barrenness, and thus caused longer intervals between births, but whether this was due to physiological processes or merely to sexual taboos during lactation we do not know.

After marriage, pregnancy was accepted as normal, natural and a thing to be desired. Outside marriage, feelings towards a prospective bastard were ambiguous but not necessarily devoid of affection. Pierre Clergue's first impulse was to say, 'I am a priest and I do not want a child.' Béatrice's answer: 'What should I do if I become pregnant? I should be dishonoured.' And then gradually their feelings change: the priest ends up by saying to his mistress, 'After your father's death, we'll have a child.'²

1 i.370. See also Agnes Francou, nurse to the Waldensian Raymond de la Coste. She suckled him after his mother's death, and then spent the rest of her life with him (i.125).

2 i.225, 243, 244, 245.

It soon became possessed of a soul, and thus took on considerable value, including emotional significance. For, as the Albigensian Vulgate known among the peasants of the Pays d'Aillon said, 'The world is full of old souls running madly about'. If these souls came from the body of someone who had been wicked, they immediately entered through the opening *in the belly of any female animal – bitch, rabbit or mare – who had just conceived an embryo not yet supplied with a soul*.¹ But if the wandering soul came from the body of someone whose life had been innocent, it could enter into the womb of a woman, and take possession of a newly-conceived human foetus.

So, in Cathar Montallou, a foetus was bound to be good since it was immediately provided with an innocent soul. This was one more reason why it should be loved by its mother from the womb. 'But I am pregnant. What should I do with the fruit I bear, if I ran away with you to the heretics?' said Béatrice de Planissoles to her steward (i.219). This sentiment was not exclusive to ladies nobly born. Alazaïs de Bordes, a simple peasant of Ornolac, says (i.193): *The other day we were crossing the Ariège in a boat, and the river was in flood; we were very frightened of being wrecked and drowned. Especially me; for I was pregnant.* The subsequent dialogue shows clearly that Alazaïs's fear was not for herself but for her unborn child. Is it by chance that the Fournier Register mentions contraception but never deliberate abortion?²

In such conditions the birth of a child could become a matter of care and anxiety. But, culturally and emotionally, it was still felt as a fundamental happiness: Jacques Authié, in a homily delivered to Pierre Maury (iii.130), makes the Devil say, 'You will have children. And you will rejoice more for one child, when you have one, than for all the peace you now enjoy in Paradise.' Satan is supposed to be speaking to angels in Heaven, doomed to fall. But what he says reflects the spontaneous attitude of the villagers, who were in favour of birth and friendly towards infants, an attitude against which official Catharism laboured in vain. Pierre Maury himself, and many others with him, knew that a baptism was a source of merit and joy, transmuted into solid friendships (iii.185).

1 ii.35. See also i.220, for Raymond Roussel's opinion. The Waldensians of Pamiers also thought a foetus had a soul (i.88).

2 The single reference is to a spontaneous abortion, genuine or imaginary (i.519).

their earliest days. Raymond Roussel, a country steward, described clearly practices which were not regarded as new in the first half of the fourteenth century. *Alicia and Serena were ladies of Chateaurvieux. One of these ladies had a child in the cradle and she wanted to see it before leaving* [she was going to join the heretics (i.221)]. *When she saw it she kissed it; then the child began to laugh. She had started to go out of the room where the infant lay so she came back to it again. The child began to laugh again; and so on, several times, so that she could not bear to tear herself away from the child. Seeing this she said to her maid-servant: 'Take him out of the house.'*

Her journey was to bring her to the stake.

Despite what some writers have said about love of children being a comparatively recent phenomenon, this was undeniably an ambience of affection, and the death or even illness of a young child, or separation from it, could be a source of sorrow and real suffering for parents. Especially, of course, for the mother. *In our village*, says Pierre Austatz, *bayle of Ornlac (i.202), there lived in her house a woman called Bartholomette d'Urs (she was the wife of Arnaud d'Urs, of Vicdessos). She had a young son, who slept with her in her own bed. One morning when she woke up she found him dead beside her. She started to weep and lament.*

'Do not weep,' I said. 'God will give the soul of your dead son to the next child you conceive, male or female. Or else his soul will find a good home somewhere else.'

For offering this easy consolation, the *bayle* of Ornlac was to spend eight years in prison, and then to be condemned to wear the double yellow cross (i.203, 553).

There are many examples in upper Ariège of the sorrow of country parents at the death of their offspring. It is true that within the framework of the *domus* system, love for children was not, in the last resort, entirely disinterested. Bèlibaste suggested as much when exhorting Pierre Maury against remaining a bachelor (iii.188). Alazais Azéma was more precise still, reporting on the feelings of Guillaume Benet, a farmer of Montailou, on the loss of his son (i.321). *When Raymond Benet, son of Guillaume Benet, died, I went after a fortnight to Guillaume Benet's house. I found him in tears.*

'Alazais,' he said, 'I have lost all I had through the death of my son Raymond. I have no one left to work for me.'

it.

But if a male child meant a strong right arm to Guillaume Benet, he also meant much more. Guillaume loved Raymond for himself. And he was somewhat consoled to think that Guillaume Authié had hereticated his son before he died. So the son was in fact happier than his father, left behind in this vale of tears: *'I hope,' said Guillaume, 'that my son is in a better place than I am now.'*

When Guillemette Benet of Montailou lost a daughter and was weeping for her, Alazais Azéma tried to console her (i.320). *'Cheer up, you still have some daughters left; and anyhow you can't get the one that is dead back again.'*

To which Guillemette replied: *'I would mourn even more than I do for the death of my daughter; but, Deo gratias, I have had the consolation of seeing her hereticated on the night before her death by Guillaume Authié, who hurried here in a blizzard.'*

Sincere as all this affection was, it was also ritualized socialized and shared. So were the condolences offered to a bereaved parent by friends and neighbours. The difference there might be between a father's and a mother's love is shown in the story of the Pierre family, an episode which has the additional interest of dealing with a little girl less than one year old. Despite the infant's extreme youth, it was undoubtedly the object of emotion. Raymond Pierre was a sheep-farmer in the village of Arques, a terminus on the migration route used by the people of Montailou. He had one daughter, Jacotte, by Sybille his wife (iii.414-15). Jacotte, not yet a year old, was seriously ill, and her parents decided, so much did they love the child, against all the rules of heresy, to have her hereticated before she died. In theory it was not right to hereticate anyone so young: *Jacotte did not have the understanding of good.* But Prades Tavernier, the *parfais* who undertook the ceremony, was laxer than the Authiés and thought there was nothing to be lost by it.¹ So he started to administer the *consolamentum*: *He performed a lot of bows and elevations, and placed that rare object, a book, on the child's head.* Once these rites were accomplished, Raymond Pierre could say to his wife, *'If Jacotte*

¹ iii.144. In fact, Prades Tavernier, a villager by origin, not a bourgeois like the Authiés, was influenced by the pressure of Catholic behaviour, and administered the *consolamentum* to a baby in just the same way as a Roman priest would administer baptism in the same circumstances.

*daughter as much as this heretic has given her.*²

Full of joy and disinterested love, Raymond Pierre left the house to see Prades Tavernier on his way. Before going, the *parfait* told Sybille not to give the baby any milk or meat. If Jacotte lived, all she was to have was fish and vegetables (ii.414). For a child of that age, and in the dietetic conditions of the period, this was risky. In fact, what it amounted to was that after the father and the *parfait* left, Jacotte would be doomed to imminent death by a process similar to the *endura*, or final fast.

But there was a hitch. Sybille Pierre's love for her little girl was essentially warm and physical, not spiritual and sublime like that of Raymond. So, relates Sybille, when my husband and Prades Tavernier had left the house, I could not bear it any longer. I couldn't let my daughter die before my very eyes. So I put her to the breast. When my husband came back, I told him I had fed my daughter. He was very grieved and troubled, and lamented. Pierre Maury [Raymond Pierre's shepherd] tried to console his master. He said to my husband, 'It is not your fault.'

And Pierre said to my baby, 'You have a wicked mother.'

And he said to me, 'You are a wicked mother. Women are demons.'

My husband wept. He insulted and threatened me. After this scene, he stopped loving [diligere] the child; and he also stopped loving me for a long while, until later, when he admitted that he had been wrong. (Raymond Pierre's change of heart occurred at the same time as all the inhabitants of Arques decided collectively to renounce Catharism.) My daughter Jacotte, Sybille concluded (ii.415), survived this episode for a year; and then she died.

All this shows that there was not such an enormous gap, as has sometimes been claimed, between our attitude to children and the attitude of the people in fourteenth-century Montaillou and upper Ariège. Another example is the case of Raymond Benet's new-born son, who was not expected to live. Perhaps his mother was already dead. Guillemette Benet, who lived in the same village as her brother, tells the story (i.264). Raymond Benet of Ornalac had a new-born son who was dying. He sent for me when I was going to the woods to gather firewood, so that I could hold the dying child in my arms. So I did hold it from morning until evening, when it died.

There are, of course, some differences between our attitude to our

of Montaillou towards their offspring. But they probably loved their children just as intensely as we do, and perhaps even spoiled them too.¹ Of course, parental love had to be divided up among a greater number of children than today. It also had to adapt itself to a higher rate of infant mortality. Lastly, many couples seemed to be comparatively indifferent to very young infants.² But this indifference was less marked than has recently been claimed.³

The first stage of childhood in Montaillou and the neighbouring villages covered the period from birth to weaning. We do not know whether weaning took place between one and two years, or nearer the age of two. Nor do we know whether children were swaddled. A cradle is mentioned in connection with the child of a noble family in Chateaufort (i.221). It is worth recalling that at a time when there were no perambulators or bottles, the links of dependence between infants and their mother, wet-nurse or the maidservant who looked after them, were much closer than they are nowadays. Infants were usually breast-fed, and in general spent much more time in their mother's arms. For example, Guillemette Clergue says (i.335), *One holiday I was standing in the square at Montaillou with my little daughter in my arms when my uncle Bernard Tavernier of Prades came up and asked me if I had seen his brother. Raymond Arsen remarks (i.371), At a family reunion organized for the wedding of Raymond Belot, I was standing by the hearth holding in my arms the baby daughter of Alazaïs, Raymond's sister.* This dependence

¹ I think I have said enough to counter the point of view expounded by Madame B. Vourzay, who writes that 'children were of little account' for the people of Montaillou. (Vourzay (1969), p. 91). It is true, as she rightly says, that grown-ups in upper Ariège were afraid that children might betray them to the Inquisition. But in my view this did not affect the general feeling towards children.

² There is little mention of the death of infants in Montaillou itself, though such losses must have been frequent.

³ There is not enough information available for us to go into the question of the attitude of grandparents. But, to take a few examples, Béatrice de Planissoles was an attentive grandmother (i.249) and a dead grandmother came back as a ghost to embrace her grandchildren in bed (i.135). The Fournier Register tells us nothing about grandfathers: men were much less likely to live long enough to become grandparents. But see iii.305 for the interest taken by Raymond Authié (namesake of the *parfait*) in a suggestion of marriage concerning his granddaughter, Guillemette Cortil.

...egencies, thus a man may have the intelligence of good and of evil and receive our faith,' said Pierre Authié to Pierre Maury (iii.124). Pierre Maury himself confirmed this point of view (iii.143). *Gaillarde, Guillaume Escamier's sister, and wife of Michel Leth, and Esclarmonde, his other sister, aged about twelve, were believers in the heretics.*

The Inquisition rounded up everyone in Montailloü over the age of about twelve.

But although boys might enter a profession at this age, when girls grew to be twelve or so they did not become shepherdeses. In Occitania, unlike the Lorraine of Joan of Arc, all the shepherds were male. Sooner or later they would have to migrate with their sheep and that was not a woman's job. But, of course, there was a rite of passage into adolescence for girls as well. When menstruation began, a mother would talk frankly to her daughter. Béatrice de Planissoles looked her daughter Philippa straight in the eye and asked her what was the matter (i.248). Philippa's friends and relations then began to look for a husband for her.

In Prades d'Aillon, a bigger and more cheerful village (more advanced, too, for the people there played chess), young people of fifteen and over formed a specific age group, with their own dances and games at festival times. It may well be that the young men and women of Montailloü also formed one or two groups of their own. But under the stifling *domus* system, such groups could not have much independent existence. There was nothing like the confraternities of young people which flourished in Provence in the seventeenth century. Moreover, the girls married too young to remain long in such groups. As for the young men, after the age of eighteen they were soon incorporated in the group of adult males. This group, although divided against itself, was the predominant group in Montailloü.

When it came to old age, there was a different pattern for men and women. In their thirties, men were in their prime. In their forties, they were still strong. But after about fifty a man was old in those days, and his prestige, unlike that of an elderly woman, did not increase with time.

Old men were rarer than old women, and the few who did survive in Montailloü were not surrounded with the respect and affection lavished on such old ladies as Na Roqua, Guillemette 'Belote', Mengarde Clergue and many another stout old dame in the Pays d'Aillon or the Catalan diaspora. Old Pons Clergue had no authority over his son the

activities as an informer. When he died, Pons Clergue had long since ceased to be the head of his *domus*. Pons Rives too trembled before the grown-up son who had taken command of the *ostal*. When his daughter wanted to borrow a mule, he could not grant her request without asking his son's permission (i.339-40).