


# Public Spaces, Private Faces: Medieval Women As Proven Assets
# A Brief Overview In Illumination

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Abstract

Plenty is known about a man's role and freedoms to inhabit and move within Medieval life and society. From status to employment to choices, men's roles are clear; a man can work at any occupation he wishes, be out of doors or in common spaces when he chooses, and exercise his superiority over his wife and family. What about women? This project aims to provide a brief overview of women's lives as illustrated by illuminations in addition to analyzing stereotypes and the continuation of Classical ideology as preached by the Catholic Church and utilized as the norms set forth by Medieval society. Illuminations in addition to Medieval literature and research published by scholars is utilized to prove that women led equally complex hardworking and public lives. Women could not limit themselves to the home and domestic duties but had to rise above the discrimination and difficulties of their environment. It quickly becomes clear that women were employed out of the home as embroiderers, brewers of beer, barber surgeons, midwives, and so on in addition to domestic duties such as hunting, tending livestock, and reaping fields. They were also respected members and leaders of the Church until limitations were placed upon them as discussed herein. The findings lean towards a need for further careful interpretations and readings of illuminations in conjugation with texts and teachings of the Middle Ages for there is much that can be learned of iconography, stereotypes, and truths as portrayed in Medieval images.

Linnea Strileckis

# Public Spaces, Private Faces: Medieval Women As Proven Assets
## Illuminated Medieval Women

The role of women has been often truncated and misrepresented throughout history and in its representation in historical studies, texts, and visual portrayals. Yet this is not where the story begins nor ends. Society, in its working form of culture, structure, and economics, would not be where it is if not for women's hands and minds participating in its evolution. From the private interior space of the home to the on display public sphere, women were there, alongside or in a parallel space to men. Medieval women were no exception; middle and lower working class women needed to understand business and get their hands dirty learning a trade.[1] There was a limit to the profession a woman may practice, how far she may advance her trade, where she may work, and what she may earn practicing her discipline; these limitations were minor during the early centuries of the Medieval Period but grew as time wore on. With the spread of Christianity and an idea that women were impure and lesser in morals and character than men, women were removed from their occupations or, if they remained working, their names were erased, being replaced by a man's, either their closest kin or their employer. Men, utilizing prejudice written in the bible and outdated Classical thoughts, attempted to eradicate women's names and contributions in the public life and economy of the Medieval Period. As varying as women's skills were, so were the depictions of them. From deceptive seductresses to lewd objects and victims of men's desires to saintly and motherly to hardworking members of society, women are represented visually in all guises. Illuminations, being the most numerous form of imagery, depict women in three general categories, theologians view of women, the ideal woman, and the real woman. To some extent, scholars should trust all representations, taking into account the written archives, fiction, and archeological findings. Medieval women were there and will not be overlooked as will be proven herein.

There exists great abstraction and deduction from the limited visual and archival evidence available. An estimated mere ten percent of that which was produced and recorded by means of written record or artistic representation survives from the Medieval Period. Who decided what should be retained and preserved perhaps biased what is now study. Can we trust the written archives and visuals that have survived? Scholars must extrapolate and interpret from what exists to deduce the importance of and involvement of women in Medieval society as the large-scale records simply do not exist to the extent which students of history wish them to. In addition, the largest representation of surviving documents records the upper classes; much less survives of the lower classes and a mere scant regarding the lowest echelons of society. Eighty to eighty-five percent of the Medieval population were labeled as peasants.[2] As can be imagined, this is a great number of individuals ranging from 1,000,000 in England from the year 1000 to 2,200,000 at the start of the sixteenth century, half of whom were women. Therefore it can be accurately deduced that women worked alongside men in most if not all chores in addition to professions. When were women's voices silenced? What led to their fluctuating role in the public economic life? How was their subjugation perpetuated into stereotypes? Much of women's absence from archives and silence in history can be gleaned from the Christian Church rising to and asserting power during the Medieval Period. The church stretched its reach into the political, secular, and private lives of the population. It relied on attempting to revive Classical ideals and beliefs that crudely denoted women as the

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[1] The Medieval Period is to be loosely defined as the time period between the decline of the Roman Empire in Europe during the fifth century, lasting approximately one thousand years, ending during the fifteenth century as the Renaissance spread from southern to northern Europe, an era in which the Reformation took place.

[2] A peasant is an individual reliant and surviving from that which can be produced via the land either grown directly from the soil or from livestock in the fields.

inferior sex. Much of their public domain was depicted as being unsafe and limiting due to the actions of men.

Women are visually everywhere, working the fields, minding the shops, heating the homes. All of this must be taken into account when recounting an inclusive history. 'There are a number of issues to be raised when approaching medieval women's history,'[3] Normington notes during her discussion of the scarcity of women being recorded in archives. Women's names simply do not arise in history unless they are a woman of great power or achievement, but what were non-aristocratic women mastering during the medieval period? What great contributions to medieval society were these women making? Society runs by the working classes, yet their names and individuality are oftentimes hidden, lost, or taken for granted. As scholars and students including Normington explain, women's names are masked by those of their male relatives, their husbands, fathers, brothers, uncles, and so on because they were not, generally, the heads' of households, guilds, or shops.[4] There exist difficulties in interpreting archives and archaeological evidence in uncovering the extent of female accomplishment. Women's identities and individualities were hidden. Women carried the names of their families, either the families they were born into or that of their husbands, limiting their ability to be known on their own without a relation to the male. This, by no means, makes them lesser contributors to the economic and social wellbeing of medieval society. It does make them hidden figures, needing to be brought carefully to the forefront so as not to perpetuate stereotypes, misjudgment, or prejudice.

It could be understood that spaces, physical or implied, were gendered. This is not always clearly delineated, but there existed spaces in which women could not go and spaces in which women's safety was not secured. This notion of gendered spaces spilled over into a gendered division of labour. Women were noted to be the lesser in strength of the two sexes, slighter and not as adept at lifting, pulling, or carrying goods in addition to being less fit to wrangle livestock or fend off an attacker, be that either wild beast or man. The ruling men of the Middle Ages, influenced by Classical thinkers, the clergy pressing the populace to stricter ideals interpreted from biblical sources, and men of certain professions, extrapolated on the perceived physical weakness of women into numerous aspects of Medieval livelihood. The propaganda was preached, written about, and depicted visually.

## I. Christianity And Women: The Feminine As Threatening

Medieval theologians, notably Christian and men, held much influence over the secular sphere during the Medieval period, including sway over the law and politics. Aristotle saw women as the weaker sex, man as the default gender ruling over the inferior woman.[5] The evidence is substantial so as to correctly deduce that Medieval philosophy was drawn upon and evolved from Classical sources, whether they be Greek or Latin. Far before the Renaissance saw itself as the rebirth of Classical nature, Medieval church practitioners were drawing upon and perpetuating the beliefs of Classical thinkers, using these sources to subjugate and attempt to silence women's choices and individuality. Classical philosophy was conjoined with Christian beliefs to relegate women to second class citizens. The Bible states that on the sixth day, God created Adam from a lump of clay and, as no other companion could be found among the beasts and birds that God gave Adam dominion over, a companion was

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[3] Katie Normington, *Gender And Medieval Drama,* (Martlesham, UK: Boydell and Brewer; D.S. Brewer, 2004), pp. 21-32, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7722/j.ctt81n8h.6>, [Accessed 5th October 2022], p. 23.

[4] Normington, *Gender and Medieval Drama,* p. 23. See also James A. Brundage, *Law, Sex, And Christian Society In Medieval Europe,* (Chicago: The University Of Chicago Press, 1987); Eleanor Janega, *The Once And Future Sex: Going Medieval On Women's Roles In Society,* (New York: W.W. Norton And Company, 2023), Henrietta Leyser, *Medieval Women: A Social History Of Women In England 450-1500,* (London: Weidenfeld And Nicolson, 1996).

[5] Aristotle, *Politics,* Trans. By Benjamin Gowett, <http://classics.mit.edu>, Parts XII and XIII.

made. 'So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs […] and the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" [and] a man cleaves to his wife, […] they become one flesh.'[6] Male clerics preached this ideal to their flock.



Figure One: MS M.638, fol. 1v. Artist Unknown, *The Crusader Bible* [Illumination on Vellum] (1240's) ,themorgan.org. (Accessed: 15 November 2022). Lower left corner - The image from *The Crusader Bible* produced in Paris illuminates the fifth and sixth day of The Creation in addition to The Temptation and Fall of Man. In the lower left corner, Adam is depicted asleep as God draws Eve, completely formed, from his torso.

The clergy used Biblical quotations to inform society that men had power over women; man was created first and only then so that man could procreate to produce more men, be amused, be kept in company, and not be lonely was woman created from man for man, but she was not to think, act, or subsist on her own. Man was also created in God's image, 'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him,'[7] but not woman. In its simplest form, the depiction of God as a man gave men the misguided confidence to act superior over women. Hence woman was not as perfect in body nor in mind. Images, as shown in Figure One, of man and woman being of one flesh, more notably of woman from man's flesh, acted as a visual story for the Medieval populace. In addition to words, either in print or heard in church, the Bible was illuminated and religious images decorated Medieval churches to teach and influence the masses.

The Christian Bible is riddled with lowly depictions of women. Eve is responsible for the fall of man, resulting in humans being cast from the Garden of Eden, the earthly paradise over which man ruled all flora and fauna. In Figure Two, a serpent with the head and torso of a woman is writhing out of a fruit tree, the tree of knowledge, and offering Eve a piece of fruit. Eve, in her weakness, acquiesces and eats the fruit as 'the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made.'[8] This action leads to the downfall of man, as Eve then offers the fruit to Adam who in turn, trusting his companion Eve, and seeing that Eve has this new-found knowledge, and not to be outdone nor left out of the experience, eats the fruit. God, walking in the garden calls to Adam, who was hiding himself for new-found shame of his nakedness, confesses to God '[T]he woman whom thou gavest to be with me,

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[6] Genesis, 2:21-25, *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version,* (Camden, N.J.: Thomas Nelson And Sons, 1952).

[7] Ibid, Genesis, 1:27.

[8] Ibid, Genesis, 3:1.

she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.'[9] Eve confesses her disobedience. Visually, Girault's Temptation is not the sole example of the serpent depicted with female characteristics. The image in the lower right from Figure One also portrays the serpent with the head of a woman. More often than not, the fall of men is attributed to women, Eve and a serpent represented with female attributes.

God, in his wrath, cast Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden into the harsh world that Medieval people would be well acquainted with, subsisting off the plants and animals of the land. The expulsion from the garden left man and woman reduced to their base animalistic forms, slaves to the reactions and urges of their bodies as God commanded it. Women were doubly punished; not only were they ruled by their sexual organs and reduced to being seen as wanton and ever attempting to seduce men into sexual sin, they were given the pain and dangers of child birth.[10] God states it, and the church perpetuated it; man was to rule over woman lest she fall victim again.



Figure Two: Add. 19962, f.29. Rene Jean Girault, *The Temptation Of Eve, Book Of Hours* [Illumination on Vellum] (Fifteenth Century) <www.bl.uk> (Accessed: 23 November 2022).

Humans are also acutely aware of their mortality, that they are doomed to die. God assured they realize their fragility and how brief their time is on Earth. Clerics made sure that their congregations knew who was blamed for the fall of mankind, Eve, a woman. Yet, women were still men's companions and in need of control to balance their restless nature and gullible minds. Their weaker minds and morals lead them to be poorer judges of character and fall prey to dangerous situations due to their wanton bodies. They are more likely to be tempted. If a man fails or sins, a woman was to blame. These notions were taught to the lay people by the Church.

Male Christian thinkers agreed that women were the source of all sin, all that was unfortunate, and every devastating event as men were 'pious, obedient, hardworking, and oblivious to the call of temptation.'[11] Janega nods to St. Augustine (354-430) who viewed the Original Sin as an 'infection that was passed down through all generations of humans as its corporeal embodiment.'[12] These ideas came after Tertullian (155-240) whom Janega notes as viewing women as the '"devil's gateway;'" women are the ones who offer the opportunity to sin and acquiesce to the devil's vices, introducing them to men.[13] In addition, St. Cuthbert (c.634-687) is renown for his 'hatred of women … such that none dare approach his tomb for

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[9] Ibid, Genesis, 3:12.

[10] 'I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring fourth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.' Ibid, Genesis, 3:16.

[11] Janega, *The Once And Future Sex,* p. 19.

[12] Ibid, p. 17.

[13] Ibid, p. 19.

fear his curse should fall upon them.'[14] The religious men did not take responsibility nor did they preach that men should take responsibility for what was maladaptive with their moral character. Christianity and the men who preached it repressed and blamed women, robbing them of their opportunities to progress in society, either secular or religious.

## II. Ideals For Women: From Christianity To Popular Influence

Monasteries rose to their height in numbers, power, and influence during the Medieval Period. The first monasteries were found during the fourth century in Egypt and spread north into Europe, leading to the first being developed in England by Augustine at Canterbury at the end of the sixth century. Leyser informs us that the first religious houses in Anglo-Saxon England were not gendered, not separated by sex, but within them men and women lived together in what is known as a double monastery or a double house striving to be a religious, learned community and 'not as retreats from the world but as a means of both Christianising and ruling it.'[15] The nuns and monks lived within the same abbey, housed in personal quarters in separate buildings. Abbesses of high social birth oversaw the monasteries as opposed to their male counterparts. Nuns were regarded in equal esteem to monks, writing in fluent Latin and corresponding to other religious houses including to clerics of high rank and to the pope. Religious houses throughout history have been the central building and influence for the surrounding town or city. The church would have acted as religious house but also as meeting place, therefore if a town existed near a monastery, that monastery and its abbess would be looked upon for guidance, both spiritual and political.

The power of abbesses began to fall as male clerics began corresponding with the pope and enacting restrictions upon the female members of religious orders in addition to women of society. Women were limited when they could attend church based upon their monthly cycles and childbirth.

> When Augustine had written to Gregory the Great, seeking advice on various points of missionary strategy, one of his questions had been whether a menstruating woman could take communion; the Pope had replied that it was a matter of choice. The ruling of the eighth-century *Penitential of Theodore* on the same issue was quite different: "Women shall not in the time of impurity enter a church or communicate - neither nuns nor laywomen; if they presume [to do this] they shall fast for three weeks."[16]

Women are being squeezed from access to church, even nuns, women piously living devoted to God and a life of strict limitations. Men are leaving women out of practicing their religion and preserving their souls. In addition to not being allowed in church while menstruating, women are not to enter a church for forty days after delivering a baby due to being seen as unclean from the fluids and act of childbirth. Churching acted as a ritual purification and time of thanks for the survival of the mother, even if her child did not. It seems that men were distrustful of women's bodies and how they functioned and limited their access to church in addition to other aspects of society.

Nuns, living as wives of Christ, were subject to scrutiny and their purity questioned. The Second Council of Nicaea banned the creation of any new double monasteries.[17] It was not deemed acceptable for men and women of a religious calling to dwell in such proximity. Monastic houses became gendered so as not to tempt monks into sin by the nuns. Yet priests would have been, for the most part, the teachers and overseers of their female counterparts for much of monastic history. Nuns, as women, could not be trusted to pass on the word of the

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[14] Leyser, *Medieval Women*, p. 39.

[15] Ibid, p. 24.

[16] Ibid, p. 39.

[17] The Second Council of Nicaea in 787 banned in its twentieth canon the creation of any new double monasteries.

Lord or the teachings of the Bible; this was left to men. Leyser notes that it is women who take more to devotional learning than men in monasteries such as Whitby Abbey in Whitby, England where, in addition to the monastic sites of Flixborough in Humberside and Brandon in Suffolk, studies 'have uncovered plentiful evidence of busy *scriptoria* where nuns would have copied manuscripts.'[18] She notes that these were likely double monasteries. While there is no proof for women authors as opposed to scribes at these sites, there is no definitive proof against it either.[19] Women continued their studies within gendered spaces.

Becoming a nun would oftentimes have been the choice of the woman's male kin. Becoming a nun would honor her family in a great way; her dowry would become a contribution to the church and ensure her family favor. A more coveted position is that of anchoress, a woman who lived out her life in a cell attached to a church or near a populace center piously as bride of Christ. She entertained her sacred visions and provided predictions and guidance to those who visited her and spoke to her through a small, obscured window shielding her eyes from the seductions of the physical world. In Figure Three, last rights and prayers akin to those given at funerals are read to the anchoress. The anchor-hold was her final destination; where she would dwell as a virgin and pure the rest of her life, and, perhaps, even sealed in upon her death. The male counterparts to nuns and anchoresses would have been monks and anchorites who chose to enter the order with their own minds; being men, this would have been acceptable. Men could make up their own minds, whereas women needed to be guided.



Figure Three: MS 451, fol. 76v. Artist Unknown, Illumination from a Pontifical, *Tabula* [Illumination on Vellum] (c. 1400) <www.bl.uk> (Accessed 23 November 2022).
The illumination, an ornamentation of the letter 'O' abstracts the walling in of an anchoress. A bishop is performing the last rights on the woman before she fulfills her destiny, becoming a permanent fixture in her cell attached to the church.

One noted anchoress who interpreted and recorded her own visions was Julian of Norwich (1342-c.1416), who lived walled into a cell attached to the church of what is now known as St. Julian in Norwich, England. Her visions led her to have profound insight in the Holy Trinity, alluding to Jesus as a mother figure, '[w]herefore him behooveth to find us, for the dearworthy love of motherhood hath made him debtor to us.'[20] This notion of Jesus as mother is a prominent motif for Christian female visionaries; Jesus fed his followers or children with the last supper, took upon himself their sins, and died for them as a mother feeds and sacrifices herself for her children.[21] Women, identifying with Christ would be more likely to live a pure and virtuous life, so the priests hoped.

Julian of Norwich was renowned and attracted those looking for advice and had interest in her visions. There exists mention of her in *The Book Of Margery Kempe,* an autobiography

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[18] Ibid, p. 27.

[19] Ibid, p. 28.

[20] Julian Of Norwich, *A Book Of Showings To The Anchoress Julian Of Norwich*, in *The Norton Anthology Of English Literature: The Middle Ages,* Vol. 1A, 7th Ed., Ed. By Alfred David et al, (New York: W.W. Norton And Company, 2000), p. 363.

[21] Elizabeth Petroff, 'Medieval Women Visionaries: Seven Stages To Power,' *A Journal Of Women Studies,* Vol. 3, No. 1, Spring 1978, pp. 34-34, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3345990>, [Accessed 5th October 2022], p. 39.

of a Medieval woman, perhaps the earliest autobiography in the English language, dictated to a monk on her deathbed. This dictation is troubling as the monk, being a man, could have interpreted or taken liberties with that which Margery (c.1273-c.1438) said so as to make the woman sound more pious than she may have been. That is not certain, but there is mention of Margery visiting Julian of Norwich for advice, '[s]o then she was charged by our Lord to go to an anchoress in the same city, who was called Dame Julian […and discussed] many holy speeches and conversations that our Lord spoke to her soul, and many wonderful revelations which she revealed to the anchoress to know whether there was any deceit in them, for the anchoress was an expert in such things and could give good advice.'[22] The church decreed that the only respectable life for a woman was a holy life, a celibate life lived in repentance for their sin and in contemplation.

Once denied their sexuality, women could be open to God and his word. The notion of female mystics and saints relied upon women being used as vessels to transmit the word of the Lord through visions. Their prized virginity left them pure, as the Virgin Mary, to receive the word of God. As Petroff writes with regards to Saint Margaret of Cortona, these visions and renown as women transcending their wanton ways, led to a cult that 'was especially important among women, for whom she functioned as a new kind of role model.'[23] Cults to female saints became popular throughout Medieval Europe, idolizing women who chose to protect their virginity and chose death rather than living conventional lives as wives bound to their wifely duties, namely sex. Several female saints' stories address denying marriage or sex which leads to their torture and death. Among them are St. Ursula (fourth century), martyred when she refused to marry a pagan chieftain; St. Margaret (fourth century), swallowed by a dragon from which she burst forth unscathed only to be beheaded when she refused the advances of a Roman prefect; and St. Lucy (fourth century), blinded herself and was stabbed after refusing to marry. Yet it was men who proclaimed, preached, and interpreted these visions and stories of saints,[24] using saints as models for common women, giving them ideals they should ascribe towards.

This did not eradicate the suspicion of Medieval nuns, for they were still women and capable of dastardly deeds that led men into sinful acts. There abound numerous tales of the Devil disguising himself as a woman, even a religious woman, to gain access to powerful or pious men in order to seduce them into sin just as the serpent and Eve seduced Adam. McAvoy discusses one such incident from Giraldus Cambrensis' *Opera* in which an anchorite is seduced by the devil masquerading as a nun 'who will incite the warmongering English to attack and kill more than three thousand Welshmen in battle.'[25] The Devil used women as a guise as women's wanton ways were not that far removed from Satan's evils. The populace would except the Devil in the role of a woman as they were warned repeatedly against women, their lust, and their uncleanliness from menstruation and birthing children. Figure Four depicts the devil, in the guise of a provocatively dressed woman with horns, pulling down the sheets to a bed. Women as temptresses would lead men into sin equated within this image in which Satan as a woman attempts to seduce St. Anthony of Egypt who resisted and would go on to found monasticism. Clerics taught that the sole way to escape women's and the Devil's ill ways was a life of religious devotion.

Abbeys would offer education not limited to those living within its walls but to the children of the surrounding areas, teaching not only the Bible but mathematics in so far as

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[22] Margery Kempe, *The Book Of Margery Kempe,* Trans. By Anthony Bale, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 41-42.

[23] Petroff, 'Medieval Women Visionaries,' p. 34.

[24] Ibid, p. 37.

[25] Liz Herbert McAvoy, *Anchoritic Traditions Of Medieval Europe,* (Martlesham, UK: Boydell And Brewer; Boydell Press, 2012), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7722/j.ctt81hf3.16>, [Accessed 22nd April 2022], p. 200.

would be necessary to carry out a livelihood, perhaps some vernacular language, and passing on gender stereotypes. Only children that could be spared from the workday would have the opportunity to attend school, otherwise they would be assisting the members of their family in the day's labor. Children of upper classes would be more likely to have further education as permits their station, being more likely to be literate and knowing of more scholarly works. Those destined to be nuns were girls from families who could spare their labor in the family business or on the family farm.

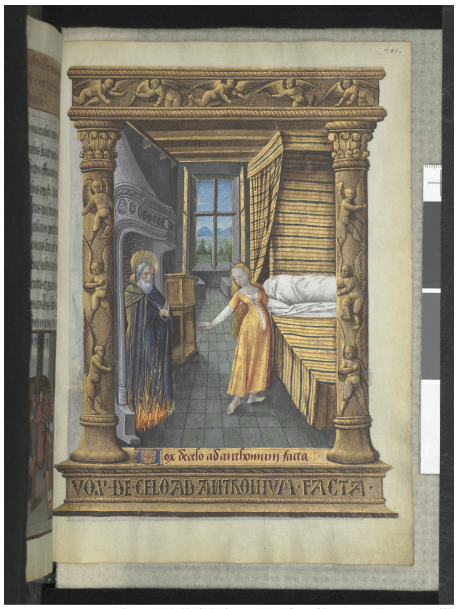



Figure Four: MS Latin 920, fol. 281r. Colombe, Jean, *The Temptation Of Saint Anthony, Book Of Hours* [Illumination and Gold on Vellum] (1470-1475) <inpress.lib.uiowa.edu> (Accessed 23 November 2022)
*The* Book Of Hours was created for Louis de Laval. Anthony resided in the desert and was tempted by the Devil, who attempted to seduce him in the guise of a woman. Her horns can clearly be seen identifying her as the Devil.

Male scholars were not immune from feminine wiles. *The Letters Of Abelard And Heloise* contain the tale of and loving correspondence between the nun Heloise and the monk Abelard from early twelfth century Paris. Abelard, a scholar responsible for the notion of limbo, became the tutor of the young Heloise after deciding that he must seduce her based upon her beauty and purity, he being in his late thirties while she was an impressionable teenager. The two had a child and were secretly married before Abelard convinced Heloise to enter a convent for protection. Seeking revenge upon the man corrupting his niece's and ward's virginity, Fulbert has Abelard castrated. Abelard lives out his days in a monastery. To Medieval minds, Heloise and her beauty are responsible for Abelard's missteps. To accuse Heloise may overstep the story as the letters between them illustrate their love but also admonish the pious life that they both subsequently lived. Heloise blames herself for Abelard's misfortune, as this is what women were taught, by equating herself with sinful women from the Bible, Eve responsible for the downfall of man, Bathsheba accused of seduction, and Job's unnamed wife who persuades Job to curse God.[26] 'For this offense, above all, may I have strength to do proper penance, so that at least by long contrition I can make some amends for your pain from the wound inflicted on you; and what you suffered in the body for a time, I may suffer, as is right, throughout my life in contrition of mind, and thus make reparation to you at least, if not to God,'[27] Heloise laments for Abelard's suffering and her own. Women were taught by clerics that they were sinful and to be blamed for the maltreatment and sexual ravishment that befell them as that is what their humors and wanton nature have led them into.

The preachings of the church contradicted themselves and were in stark contrast to the popular influences over women's bodies and beauty of the day. After all, was not woman's sole purpose to meet a man, marry that man, and produce more men? This is what the church put forth. To do so, a woman must attempt to adhere to beauty standards to attract a man. In Figure Five, an image of Bathsheba illustrates the ideal of Medieval feminine beauty. Other such images herein can be noted as portraying women's unattainable beauty, whether the women be of positive or negative influence. Bathsheba is portrayed as the ideal feminine with her mane of blond hair, a high forehead, white skin with rosy cheeks and rosebud lips, grey

[26] *The Letters Of Abelard And Heloise,* Trans. By Betty Radice, Rev. By M.T. Clanchy, (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 67.

[27] Ibid, p. 67.



Figure Five: Ms. 79 (2003.105), recto. Jean Bourdichon, *Bathsheba Bathing, Hours Of Louis XII.* [Tempera and Gold on Vellum] (1498-1499) <getty.edu> (Accessed: 23 November 2022).
The Illumination from Tours depicts Bathsheba bathing under the guise of King David. The seduction of Bathsheba ultimately resulted in the death of her husband and son.

eyes, a long neck, high and small breasts, a rounded belly, and long and thin extremities. Her genitalia is also unashamedly blatant, yet without the pubic hair that would define a mature woman. This illumination plays upon this ideal woman's nakedness and gaze. Bathsheba gives a sidelong 'come hither' glare towards Solomon whom we can equate to Louis XII.[28]

There existed a Medieval standard to feminine beauty as discussed by Janega, Leyser, Sciacca, among others, and women were expected to strive for and uphold this beauty. Cleanliness during the medieval period was seen as very important. Women in medieval paintings, illuminations, embroideries, and other art forms would most likely have been portrayed in the ideal. Clerics preached that upon Judgment Day when souls are reunited with their bodies as they rise from the grave, there exists an ideal age. Men, being of the same sex as Jesus, would roughly be thirty-three as this was the age of Christ when he was crucified. Women, conversely, would have been less, mere teenagers. Maidens were of the ideal female age, illustrated by Bathsheba and her lack of pubic hair. As Janega supports, women were preferably to be of sexual age but not of experience.[29] This ideal was difficult to obtain when most individuals have brown hair and eyes, the skin is tanned from working outside, and the body has become muscular from labour. Working women and mothers would have bodies hardened by years of physical employment, childbearing, and breastfeeding. The ideal favors the upper classes but many strove to achieve it. Women did have access to cosmetics in addition to soaps and perfumes. Young women were taught their goal was to be married with children. To make this happen, they had to emphasize their beauty. Yet clerics warned against the sin of vanity. A woman was to be naturally beautiful and not use cosmetics or any other item to alter their appearance.[30] Women were told they needed to be beautiful but were not supposed to actively enhance themselves to meet this ideal. Men formulated this idea of beauty; clerics preached against vanity, but women were expected to achieve perfection even with the risk of sin and accusations of inciting lust in men.

## III. The Dangers Of Femininity

Beauty, any identifying marks of their sexuality, and their gender in general, left women vulnerable to sin, either that of vanity or of ravishment being pressed upon them. The story of Bathsheba was preached as a warning to women that their sexual selves could lead them to

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[28] Christine Sciacca, *Illuminating Women In The Medieval World,* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2017), p. 45.

[29] Janega, *The Once And Future Sex,* p. 59.

[30] Ibid, p. 76.

abduction, rape, and death. She was at fault for being naked in her space, and a man happened to see her. Women were apprised their sex would corrupt men and any happenings upon them was their fault alone for being women.

In addition to the enforced publicity of the Bible as preached to enforce male dominance and ideals were also tales for the common people as entertainment. The most well-known Medieval theme was that of Courtly Love. Developed in southern France late in the eleventh century, the theme quickly became popularized by troubadours and spread over Europe and into England and picked up and expanded upon in literature and artwork. An image of a poet, Wernher von Teufen, as seen in Figure Six, depicts the poet and a woman on a hunt with a falcon. The image portrays tenderness between the two, as if the viewer has caught sight of a moment between lovers.



Figure Six: Cod. Pal. germ. 848, 69r. Artist Unknown, *Woman With A Hawk, The Manesse Codex* or *The Heidelberg Book Of Songs* [Illumination on Parchment] (c. 1300-1340) <ub.uni-heidelberg.de> (Accessed: 15 November 2022)
*The Manesse Code* records numerous songs, poems, and images of courtly preoccupations including courtly love.

Contemporary audiences were familiar with the tradition of courtly love through tales of Robin Hood and Maid Marion or in Arthurian tales, these being the most popularized. Courtly love is loosely described to be the love held by a knight for a lady, often of noble birth and perhaps unavailable to the knight for wooing either being that she is married or betrothed at the time of their meeting leading to their love never being recognized nor consummated. *The Play Of Robin And Marion* by the *trouvère* Adam de la Halle written c.1282 serves as a comedic opera meant to entertain yet hiding a warning of courtly love gone awry, love used in a salacious manner. The more precise and narrower theme utilized by de la Halle is that of the *pastourelle,* an Old French lyrical form of verse characterized by the romancing of a shepherdess usually by a knight that she then bests during a battle of wits and coyness, but to what danger or ends is she exposed to before her wiles and cunning allow her to escape the knight's abduction? Women, notably younger women, are meant to heed the warning of working in a remote space beyond the protection of her village and peers. Originally performed at the Angevin Court in Naples, the popular opera spread and was performed throughout Europe and into England, advancing its notions of love and danger to women. Briefly, the opera is set in the wild outside of a village. An innocent maiden shepherdess, Marion, is guarding her flock of sheep during the opening scene. She is singing a song, pining for a man, Robin. Then the knight rides into the scene, finding the maiden alone. Marion calls for Robin for help and protection from the knight, but the knight steps closer to Marion, singing in imitation of her and attempting to impress her by speaking of his falcon that catches herons. Marion bests his wits with a play on words between herons and herrings. She then goes on to attempt to dissuade the knight, informing him that she already has a love who provides for her, that she prefers country men over knights, and that her love does not intimidate her as the knight does by steering his horse too close to her. The knight retracts only to return, interrupting a picnic of Robin and Marion. This time, the knight is not dissuaded. Through some mishap and aggression towards Robin, the knight abducts Marion, pulling her atop his steed. This tale is much in contrast with the image from the Manesse Codex. The *pastourelle* warns against the sinister side of a knight, especially a

slighted knight. Women were not expected to reject a knight's promise of love, and when Marion does so, her actions enrage the knight resulting in violence. This tale ultimately has a happy ending, Marion rejects the knight, and he at last leaves her. Marion then rejoins her friends and lives happily ever after, but what happened to her during the time from her abduction to the time the knight, dejected, abandons her away from her flock? It is this interlude which dredges up ill feelings of fear and dread for Marion's maidenhead.



Figure Seven: Yates Thompson 13, f. 62. Bas-de-Page Scene, *The Taymouth Hours* [Illumination on Vellum] (2nd Quarter of the Fourteenth Century) <www.bl.uk> (Accessed: 15 November 2022)

*The Taymouth Hours* was most likely produced for Isabella of France or one of her daughters or Phillippa of Hainault. It is not known if the piece was scribed and illustrated by men or women, monks or nuns.

Much danger existed for women working out of doors in the forests or fields, dangers not only from nature but seemingly from men. As pictured in Figure Seven, the dangers to women when in the fields or forests away on their own, away from the safety of others or the common spaces of the village, are blatantly depicted. Violence, notably abduction and rape, were a real fear of medieval women. A man, herein depicted as a wild and hairy beast, attacks a woman while she is innocently out picking flowers. The hair and beastly nature of the man detracts from his humanness, putting him on par with the wild and unlawful nature of the animals of the forests. He grabs the maid around her waist, pulling her toward him in a suggestive and forceful manner. The viewer fears for her. Women learn from her. She serves as a depiction of the dangers of being on one's own, away from her acceptable environment.

It can be assumed that the women reading, meditating on, and smoothing over the images of the Taymouth Hours would be familiar with the iconography of the time, including the scene of a wild man pulling a lone maiden away form her innocent flower picking to the unkept and unsafe space of the woods. Women must not venture forth alone lest their beauty seek negative and dangerous attention from men.

Medieval society would have blamed the woman for her ill begotten circumstance. Rape and violence against women in general have been the subject of scrutiny in the law throughout history. Here again, law codes would have turned to the church and its teachings if a case was brought before it regarding rape. As Pistono writes in his article, 'Andrew the Chaplain, a twelfth-century Frenchman, who was acknowledged to be the outstanding authority on courtly love in Europe at the time, encouraged his noble audience to forget about the rules of chivalry when dealing with peasant women and to take them by force if they should feel so inclined. It would be a waste of time and words to do otherwise.'[31] Rape was seen as a crime of passion, the possession of the man by the devil, or the devil possessing the female victim enticing the man into sin. Such notions were upheld by religious and secular law.

Rape was seen as a property crime against the closest male relative of the victimized woman during Medieval history. Janega discusses rape within her book, noting that the female victim would have been victimized by the court, namely men, again after the assault, being

[31] Stephen P. Pistono, 'Rape In Medieval Europe,' *Atlantis*, Vol. 14, No. 2, Spring 1989, pp. 36-43, <ojs_admin%2C+Journal+manager%2C+1010726ar.pdf>, [Accessed 22nd April 2023], p. 39.

questioned.[32] Why was she alone? What was she doing? How was she doing it? What was she wearing? Women were not to be away from spaces deemed safe and public lest they be victimized and blamed for such victimization.

What of a woman's marriage prospects if she had been raped as a maiden? Virginity was highly prized. Some abductions resulted in compulsory marriages, especially if the man forced himself upon the woman and rape could not be proven. The unfortunate case of 'he said/she said.' Perhaps the knight in *Robin And Marion* was hoping for this outcome; that did not end up being the case. Yet, for Bathsheba, it was the case. She was forced to marry her attacker as she was begot with child, and her husband was dead. Visa versa, young couples certainly staged abductions if their choice of marriage partner was not approved upon, most notably by the male family members of the would-be bride. To circumvent these restrictions, couples would stage abductions, claiming that the incident led to consummation, thus resulting in marriage. The church, in its desire for control, quelled these false marriages, enforcing abduction as a crime with real punishments according to Brundage. Brundage sources Ivo of Chartes' *Decretum,* letters between Ivo and Pope Urban II (1088-1099), during the years of church reform. In these letters, the perpetrator or the man abducting a woman could not benefit from his crime in that he could not marry her, even if she consented to the subsequent marriage after abduction.[33]




Figure Eight: Additional 42130, fol. 172v. Artist Uknown, *Women Reaping While a Man Binds Sheaves*, *The Luttrell Psalter* [Illumination on Parchment] (c. 1320-2340) <www.bl.uk> (Accessed: 24 November 2022).
Produced as commissioned by Sir Geoffrey Luttrell, the Lord of Lincolnshire, the Psalter contains a calendar, canticles, a mass, and an antiphon and is illuminated within the text, in marginalia, and in great page details.

Did these couples unknowingly perpetuate a cycle of violence, reducing the seriousness of rape and abuse? It is fitting here to close this argument as Pistono does, quoting Christine de Pisan, a noted French poet from the turn of the fourteenth to the fifteenth century and perhaps the first women to defend her sex and the negativity and violence endured by women. In her book *The Book Of The City Of Ladies* in which her female narrator, in a dream, is told by God to defend women by building a city housing female classical and contemporary thinkers from diverse backgrounds. When pertaining to rape, Pistono quotes from Pisan, '"I am...troubled and grieved," de Pisan exclaimed, "when men argue that many women want to be raped and that it does not bother them at all to be raped by men even when they verbally protest." Women, she urged, "take absolutely no pleasure in being raped. Indeed, rape is the greatest possible sorrow for them. Many upright women have demonstrated that this is true with their own credible examples."'[34] She concludes by approving the supreme penalty of execution for rapists.[35]

The fear of rape and abduction did not dissuade women from working out of doors. The work had to be done, and many women needed to earn a wage whether to support themselves or their families. Men working alongside women would have been the norm not the

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[32] Janega, *The Once And Future Sex,* p. 211.

[33] Brundage, *Law, Sex, And Christian Society,* p. 209.

[34] Pistono, 'Rape In Medieval Europe,' p. 41.

[35] Ibid.

exception. Women worked the fields, tended the animals, and commuted to and from market to make money or assist their families with their work. An image of grain being harvested as in Figure Eight would have been a common site to Medieval people. Images of women working with men in the fields abound in Medieval books of hours and psalters. These images include men and women picking grapes, harvesting crops, and tending to the dairy. Therefore, such common urban work spaces would have been populated by men and women working conjointly, creating a safe space for women. In contrast, women working on their own or a woman working completely on her own in an outdoor and remote space away from the village or common area would be at risk for violence. Violence between the sexes should not be overlooked when recording the history of women or gendering living and working spaces. Women in more rural settings were at risk in such places outside of the home.

## IV. Working Women And The Illuminated Proof

Separation of the sexes occurred in a much more practical notion in the rendering of spaces outside of religious expectations. Life was unpredictable. Nature was unpredictable. The actions of men were unpredictable. The expected sex of a given space varied in rural and urban settings. Hanawalt discusses the differences of a gendered division of labor in comparison to gendered spaces where men and women could be seen either in sexed or mixed company.[36] Commonly, women worked in or closer to the home, their village, or more populous areas of the urban setting, places which were safer from salacious men and harm due to its proximity to people, notably her family, friends, and acceptable social circle. Women remained more commonly in the village than in the fields or forests. Women were encouraged not to leave their homes or a public space on their own. Stereotypes dictated that inside was a woman's space and outside was a man's space. Social class also dictated which forms of employment a woman would have access to. The employment would then also dictate the acceptable spaces in which the woman navigated while working. This is not to say that women did not work in these marginal spaces. In the urban setting, women would be seen harvesting the fields, herding the livestock, and trapping or hunting game, taking them out of the village and away from the relative safety of their homes. In more rural settings, women would have worked among the populous, whether this be a safer option or not is debatable.

### A. Women And Protein - How Medieval Women Contributed To A Dietary Staple

The archival information of women hunting, either for sport or food, during the middle ages is scarce. Hunting can be discussed in generally two terms, the first being any instance when individuals go out in search of an animal to kill as a source of food and the second can be described as sport or a game, The Hunt, a pastime to bring home a trophy as man conquers beast. There is scant written record of women as doing either. Yet there is a visual trace of women on the hunt accompanying men or with fellow women. Of that which remains, what is pictured is mostly of upper class women, but there also exist representations of women of other classes. Women of lower classes and occupations including but not limited to women of the holy order would have engaged in hunting. Indeed in danger of overgeneralization, if women worked alongside men in a vast array of medieval occupations, can it be safe to suggest that acquiring and processing meat be any different? Women ate meat and enjoyed sport, therefore their participation in hunting and fishing must exist to some extent.

Hunting and fishing during the medieval period was not an easy feat. For the most part, this was not a task executed solely on foot with hands or simple weapons but with aide of animals and specialized equipment. Men and women would have ridden out on horseback with hounds and hawks carrying bows and arrows, bludgeoning equipment, and knives. Bears

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[36] Barbara A. Hanawalt, 'Medieval English Women In Rural And Urban Domestic Spaces,' *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. 52, 1998, pp. 19-26, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1291776>, [Accessed 5th October 2022], pg. 19.

were hunted to extinction in the British Isles during the sixth century, wolves and boar during the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries respectively, but these would have been prized game for consumption and sport. Yet this sport was not open to the general population. Laws were in place to limit hunting in forests or on specific lands, and poaching was a noted problem.



Figure Nine: BL Royal 2 B VII, f. 156.



Figure Ten: 30 BL Royal 2 B VII, f. 153. Artist Unknown, Illuminations from *The Queen Mary Psalter* [Illumination on Parchment] (c. 1310-1320). <www.bl.uk> (Accessed: 15 November 2022).
Produced for perhaps Isabella of France, recipient and possible patron, the psalter was named as such when in the possession of Mary I of England in the sixteenth century.

Upon the arrival of William the Conqueror to England in 1066 and subsequent overtaking of the kingdom, laws regarding the forests and their use by the peoples of England were put into effect. Up until that point, the forests and common lands were life-giving areas for the populace. Slowly over time from William's reign through that of King John in the early thirteenth century, the forests were amassed and noted as belonging to the king, therefore all that dwelt within the forests also fell into the ownership of the king. Thus ended the Anglo-Saxon shared rights for the common peoples to utilize the forests for their survival. Savage discusses the Forest Law and the brutal results it had on people. William I and Henry II exercised 'cruelty […] when they extended the forest area by evicting those who lived on the land that they desired to include within the forest, and at the mutilation and execution of those convicted of purposive illegal deer-slaying.'[37] Not only the animals fell under the direction and ownership of the king, but also the flora and waterways. The populace could no longer hunt, fish, collect wood, gather food or water, live in, or graze their animals within these royal lands. Forest Law was a separate jurisdiction from Common Law, and there existed a law governing force to match.

This is not to imply that there existed no hunting grounds or forests for the non-royals to have access to. Orme discusses a charter of 1131 which grants access to hunting lands for citizens of London.[38] He goes on to list other cities and towns which had similar grants including but not limited to Canterbury, Colchester, and Swansea.[39] Yet access to the privilege of hunting had its many limitations.

Out of this time period of unrest of the gentry come the folk tales of Robin Hood as has been discussed prior. Robin and his fellow men and women poach from the forest as necessary for subsistence, to survive. In 1215, King John put into law the Magna Carta. In addition to political reform, the Magna Carta contained reforms that pertained to the use of

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[37] Henry L.. Savage, 'Hunting In The Middle Ages,' *Speculum,* Vol. 8, No. 1, January 1933, pp. 30-41, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2846846>, [Accessed 3rd April 2023], p. 33

[38] Nicholas Orme, 'Medieval Hunting: Fact And Fancy' In *Chaucer's England*, Ed. By Barbara A. Hanawalt, (Minneapolis, MN: University Of Minnesota Press, 1992), pp. 133-153, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttt6q6.12>, [Accessed 3rd April 2023], p.135.

[39] Ibid, p. 135.

forests. These new laws were reissued as the Charter of the Forest in 1217, signed by Henry III. Under the Charter of the Forest, the king's lands were greatly reduced, and public use of the forests was reinstated including the ability to hunt, forage, and graze their animals in public spaces. Yet this is not to say that the limits on hunting ended here.

If the people had access to the forests or disregarded the laws restricting their rights to utilize the land, laws were then passed to limit the items which were necessary to hunt with. The success of the hunt was greatly increased with access and the ability to use horses, dogs, and hunting weapons. As Orme notes, in 1390, the Commons of Parliament limited those who could keep hunting dogs, notably greyhounds based upon household earnings.[40] Throughout the Middle Ages, hunting restrictions were constantly fluctuating, but its existence was necessary for the survival of people needing the protein consumption.

Women would have fit into these laws, either by following the decrees or ignoring them. It must be concluded that women hunted, either for food for themselves and their family or for profit by selling their quarry. In the instance of utilizing waterways for food, women have been noted as repairing nets and sails of boats and in participating in the act of fishing.



Figure Eleven: Yates Thompson 13, f. 77v. The bas-de-page scene depicts a lady killing a boar with a spear.



Figure Twelve: Yates Thompson 13, f. 83v. This illumination depicts four women slaughtering a stag.
*The Taymouth Hours [Illumination on Vellum] (2nd Quarter of the Fourteenth Century) <www.bl.uk> (Accessed: 15 November 2022).*

Women have been illuminated in acts of hunting as seen in Figures Nine and Ten. In Figure Nine, two women can be seen hunting rabbits with a ferret. Ferrets, being predators of rabbits, were placed into rabbit burrows, frightening and chasing the rabbits into the open traps of awaiting hunters, here being depicted as women. Other such images record women hunting with bow and arrow such game as deer and foul, and in instances utilizing dogs or falcons to aid in the hunt. Figure Ten depicts just this. A woman using a bow and arrow shoots down a stag with the aid of a hound. In addition to laywomen, Power writes of hunting and hawking being popular among nuns that 'no lady's education was complete if she knew not how to manage a hawk and bear herself courteously in the field.'[41]

Hunting rights were granted to abbeys and although, as Power notes, there is no direct evidence that the nuns of these places hunted, it was a popular pastime that a woman's participation in hunting should not be ruled out.[42] Abbeys were noted to keep pets, dogs in addition to other animals, and hunting dogs in particular. Priories were known to also employ huntsmen but perhaps the women hunted for themselves.

Examples of women hunting exist in many

[40] Ibid, p. 136.

[41] Eileen Edna Power, *Medieval English Nunneries c. 1275 To 1535,* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2012), < https://www.gutenberg.org/files/39537/39537-h/39537-h.htm#Page_305>, [Accessed 20th April 2023], p. 306.

[42] Ibid, p. 306.

psalters and in books of hours. In Figure Eleven, a woman slays a boar with a sword, seemingly on her own in the woods. Figure Twelve depicts a hunting party of four women slaughtering a stag. It was not unusual for members of a hunting party to be injured or even killed during hunting expeditions. Prized larger animals were highly dangerous. Deer, boar, wolves, and bears were all armed. Deer had antlers and hooves, boars tusks, wolves teeth, and bear had claws in addition to teeth. This danger prepared men who hunted for military combat; hunting was seen as a training ground. Not so for women hunters for women did not participate in battle to the extent that men did. They were not expected to arrive on the battlefield.

Almond discusses women hunters of all classes based upon visual representations produced in the Medieval Period.[43] Yet there is little based from written record. Oggins notes in his review of the book that critics have interpreted the images as not being reality but of being silly marginalia, turning the true world upside down, a world in which rabbits hunt monkey and women hunt boars.[44] Yet so much visual art reflects real life that some of what is depicted must be true. Women must have hunted as they have worked in many other aspects of Medieval life alongside men in what are seen as male occupations. They were not simply responsible for the preparation and feast of the animals. These women worked in the butcher shops, the scalding houses, and repairing fishing gear, it is only fair to state that they would be responsible for the hunting, fishing, and netting of these animals.

## B. Brewing, At Home And In The Pub

Ale has stood the test of time, through economic and political strife, and was primarily made by women, alewives, during the Middle Ages. Water was unsafe to drink on its own in most settings due to poor understanding and access to sanitation with humans and animals sharing water sources for consumption and self-care. Ale, by its nature of needing to be heated to a high temperature, then steeped during the brewing process, was a healthier option for the body than water straight from the river or well. The process of brewing rendered microbes and other illness causing agents from the drink. Ale was also a way to utilize and preserve barley, and it contained many calories that Medieval people would be lacking otherwise. Drunkenness was a vice preached against by the Church and was not the goal of the majority of ale consumption during the Middle Ages. The alcohol content was relatively low, therefore the ale would have been suitable for drinking by children and pregnant women. Whether in a city or in a more rural area, ale was being produced. Alewives were proprietors of the ale business, selling from their homes, local tavern, or inns.

Ale spoiled and became undrinkable within a few days, therefore brewing ale was a full-time job yet one that could be done part time as the brewing time did not need to actively be attended to. Brewing ale was an occupation oftentimes taken on by women as they could begin the brewing process, then let the ale go unattended while they went about their other daily chores and occupations such as tending animals, the fields, the home, and children. It could be done as needed to produce extra income by selling the excess that the family would not be able to consume in a timely manner. In rural settings, these women would commonly sell their brews out of their homes. They may also attend local markets and sell alongside their husbands or on their own. To be spotted more easily at a market, alewives wore tall, pointed black hats as a way of standing out above the crowds of people. Alehouses were marked by a broom or ale stick mounted out from the house over the door as in Figure Thirteen.

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[43] Richard Almond, *Daughters Of Artemis: The Huntress In The Middle Ages And The Renaissance,* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Brewer, 2009).

[44] Robin S. Oggins, *The Medieval Review,* 2009, < https://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/tmr/article/view/17078/23196>, [Accessed 27th May 2023].

Brewing was an occupation open to women of all classes within the medieval town, from lower class housewife to wife of a landowner. Possibly the most famous medieval alewife was Margery Kempe. She discusses her business venture into brewing.

> 'And then, out of pure covetousness and in order to maintain her pride, she began to brew and was one of the greatest brewers in the town of N. for three or four years until she lost a lot of money, as she did not have experience of doing this. For, although she had ever such good servants and knowledge of brewing, things would not go successfully for them. For, when the ale had as fine a head on it as could be seen, suddenly the head would fall away, and all the ale would be lost one brew after another, so her servants were ashamed and did not wish to stay with her. Then this creature thought of how God had punished her before and she could not take heed, and now again through the loss of her money; and then she left off and brewed no more.'[45]

This anecdote that Margery relays serves as a warning for women of the sin of pride. It seems more than acceptable for women to practice a craft and excel at that craft, but she must not advertise or exhibit herself in such a manner so as to be guilty of sin.

The danger of sin was not the only fear of women practicing as an alewife. A brewer's home may have been open to the public as a brewhouse and served the ale either to be consumed on the premisses or poured into a flagon that the patron had supplied. Some brewhouses began to serve food to accompany the beer and had an allocated space within the home or on the family plot where this occurred. In Figure Thirteen, a hermit can be seen drinking ale while the alewife comes out of the brewhouse with a flagon of ale. This image is one of a series of illuminations depicting a narrative warning alewives and men whose wives were alewives. Subsequent scenes illustrate the gentleman, who is a hermit, seducing and having intercourse with the alewife, 'murdering the miller who catches them, and going mad with remorse; he turns into a wild man, is ultimately forgiven for his sins, and returns to his life as a hermit.'[46] This warning to women is very much akin to warnings given to many women working alone, notably out of doors as has previously been discussed, and is linked to the image of the wild man attempting to take a maiden by force. Here, the wild man is invited to the house, takes advantage of a woman alone, and destroys her life. Violence and abduction were real fears for women working in their homes when their business relied on clientele, including men, coming into their space. Images and anecdotes like these spread in order to warn women of working independently and to persuade men that they might take these jobs for themselves and forbid their wives, daughters, or relatives to employ themselves lest they be in danger. Alewives were at the epitome of their craft much into the eighteenth century, but men were slowly undermining their occupation.



Figure Thirteen: Royal MS 10 E IV. Artist Unknown, Illumination from *The Smithfield Decretals* [Illumination on Parchment] (c. 1300 with illuminations from c. 1340) <www.bl.uk> (Accessed: 15 November 2022).
This illumination comes from *The Smithfield Decretals* produced in, possibly, Toulouse, France.

Equally lascivious environments existed within the urban setting as existed in the rural setting. Ale was sold in inns, taverns, and brewhouses in cities. These places of business may

[45] Kempe, *The Book Of Margery Kempe*, p. 13-14.

[46] www.bl.uk

be run by women, but were more likely run by men who employed alewives. Taverns in the city held similar dangers to the fields in the country for women. Alcohol blurred the lines of reason. Women were warned against 'not getting drunk in taverns, not going house to house buying beer with money made form selling cloth, and not accompanying a lover to places conducive to seduction.'[47] Drunkenness was frowned upon, not only by society but by the church which saw the consumption of alcohol in excess as a sin. The excessive consumption of alcohol was seen by the church to lead to more greater sins including indecent behavior. Taverns, inns, and brewhouses often had dark corners and bedchambers attached to them, lending themselves to private spaces in which violence might occur. In Figure Fourteen, men are seen in drunken behavior as a warning against Gluttony. Depicted herein are men engaged in over-libation of alcohol. Note that there are no women pictured in the illumination as drunkenness and drink, in general, were not seen as appropriate for women to engage in, especially in mixed company and in a tavern. Women were already seen as sinful, therefore warnings against sin were directed to men.



Figure Fourteen: Add MS 27695, f. 14r. Artist Unknown, *Treatise On Vices And Virtues, The Cocharelli Codex* [Illumination on Parchment] (c. 1330-1340) <www.bl.uk> (Accessed: 5 January 2023).

Women away from their town centers and home in the rural setting were more vulnerable to criticism and violence, but there existed equally unsafe atmospheres for women in the cities. In the city, taverns and the streets were unsafe and at time salacious spaces for women to be seen in on their own. The danger of harassment was very real. Certain behavior was meant to be exhibited or refrained from by women dependent upon the space in which the woman was occupying or wished to have access to. They had to conduct themselves in a certain manner. Women working in taverns were often seen as or acted as prostitutes, pimped out by the owner of the tavern.[48] Taverns were places of clouded morals. Women who may have frequented these spaces were knowingly or unknowingly putting themselves at risk and open to violence if mistaken to be one of the prostitutes or wanton women lingering therein. There existed in these ambiguous spaces of ungendered or masculine tendencies a risk of violence between men and women. As Hanawalt points out, this 'advice' was 'designed chiefly by men.'[49] To illustrate this point, Hanawalt quotes the poem, 'How The Good Wife Taught Her Daughter,' which notes a mother teaching her daughter the appropriate place for her 'is in the home, but since she must go out she should keep her eyes down when she is in the streets.'[50] Women, more specifically young women and girls, were taught that public spaces were unsafe and contained many dangers. Just as the fields and forests were dangerous for rural women, certain streets and spaces such

[47] Hanawalt, 'Medieval English Women In Rural And Urban Domestic Spaces,' p. 22.

[48] Ibid, p. 25.

[49] Ibid, p. 22.

[50] Ibid.

as taverns, inns, and alleyways apart from the safety of peers and known shops are not a place for women or a lone woman.

The iconography associated with alewives and alehouses was adopted by men, notably clerics, when witch hunting begins later in the Medieval Period during the fifteenth century. Witches stereotypically wore the black pointed hat, rode brooms, and kept cats. All items the populace associated with the dress or identification of an alewife who often kept a cat as pest control over mice and rats which fed off the grains used to brew. If women could brew ale, what kept them from brewing dangerous concoctions? The Brewer's Guild had been established in the thirteenth century, and laws prohibiting women from being members of the brewer's guild also shut women out of this lucrative business over time.

## C. Embroidery: A Woman's Art Or A Man's Business

Embroiderers during the Medieval Period were known as broderers, and a Guild of Broderers was not granted until the sixteenth century although the men of the craft were attempting to be organized and applied for their Guild status one hundred years earlier.[51] Yet no women were mentioned. Power mentions a single instance of women entering into a guild-like business 'in orders issued in Southampton 1503 for the regulation of packing of wool for loading on to ships, which seems to have been done by women. Women were to choose two of their number annually to be wardens of their company, vacancies in the company were to be filled by nomination of Mayor and Corporation, and women were to "work the barons and pokes with their own hands and not to bawl nor scold one another".'[52] It seems that much cloth production lay in women's hands.

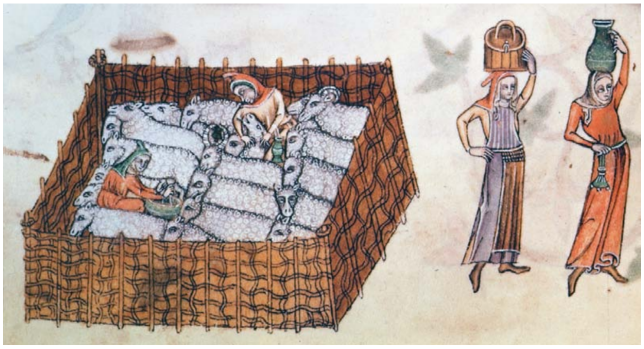


Figure Fifteen: Additional 42130 f. 163v. *Sheep Pen.*



Figure Sixteen: Add MS 42130, f. 193f. *A Woman Spinning At A Great Wheel And A Woman Carding Wool.*
Artist Unknown, Illuminations from *The Luttrell Psalter* [Illuminations on Parchment] (c. 1320-1340) <www.bl.uk> (Accessed: 24 November 2022).

England, known for its wool production, had over ten million sheep during the Medieval Period. It was a culture of wool production. Women, working alongside men, would have been responsible for the care and shearing of sheep as depicted in Figures Fifteen and Sixteen. In Figure Fifteen, three women and a man work at milking sheep. In Figure Sixteen, women can be seen combing through and spinning wool. Many of Medieval illuminations depict or allude to daily life, depicting both men and women at work and working together.

Women of every class were expected to spin, whether this be with a spindle as earlier Medieval women did or with the use of the spinning wheel which was introduced to those that could afford it during the thirteenth century. Embroidery was seen as a womanly

[51] Glyn Davies, 'Embroiderers And The Embroidery Trade,' *English Medieval Embroidery: Opus Anglicanum,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), pp. 40-47, p. 46.

[52] Eileen Edna Power, *Medieval Women,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 53.

virtue so much so that there exist illuminations of the Virgin Mary embroidering as in Figure Seventeen.[53] Davies and Michael note that many female Anglo-Saxon saints were said to have produced exceptional embroidery including 'St. Eadgyth, daughter of King Edgar (943-975); St. Eadburga, daughter of King Offa (757-796); and St. Etheldreda of Ely (636-679).'[54] Diener states straight off '[t]extile production united the female sex in Anglo-Saxon England. Spinning, weaving, and stitching were the ubiquitous and inexhaustible labors of all women, rich and poor, secular and religious.'[55] The basis of her argument lies in women creating pieces of embroidery including secular pieces and religious pieces such as alter decor, chasubles, and other liturgical vestments that were given as gifts to visually seal of alliances among the ruling leaders, promote harmony between the gift-giver and religious houses, and secure allegiance within the community of religious houses. Little is known of embroidery before the eleventh century besides the mention of female saints or the recluse Æthelswich. Diener speaks of Æthelswich, a woman living on land in Ely in near seclusion embroidering fine goods which she donated to the city and teaching young women her craft as an example of 'women run[ning] schools of embroidery on the grounds of nunneries.'[56] Women worked for themselves in embroidery as heads of businesses with apprentices perhaps as early as the ninth century.



Figure Seventeen: MS Gen. 8, f. 25v. Artist Unknown, *The Virgin Mary Is Working With An Embroidery Hoop, Klosterneuburger Evangelienwerk* [Illumination on Parchment] (1340) <e-codices.unifr.ch> (Accessed: 23 November 2022). The Virgin Mary embroidering.

Anglo-Saxon women before the Conquest worked more equally alongside men, earning similar wages and performing tasks overwhelmingly seen as masculine yet their names subsequently become less numerous. Davies begins his essay, 'Between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, documentary references to English embroiderers are relatively plentiful [surviving] in royal accounts, legal records, and correspondence.'[57] Examples of these women included Mabel of Bury St. Edmunds commissioned during the thirteenth century by Henry III, Christiana of Enfield who supplied pieces for Queen Eleanor during the fourteenth century, and Catherine of Lincoln working alongside Christiana for Queen Margaret.[58] Leyser accounts Anglo-Saxon embroiders stating 'work of English needlewomen - the aristocratic as well as the less nobly-born - was already famous throughout eleventh-century Europe.'[59] She names Queen Edith of Wessex, wife of Edward the Confessor, and Leofgeat, a female landowner of the eleventh century, busied with gold embroidery for the king.[60]

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[53] Glyn Davies and M. A. Michael, 'Introduction,' *English Medieval Embroidery,* p. 1.

[54] Ibid, p. 2.

[55] Laura Michele Diener, 'Sealed With A Stitch: Embroidery And Gift-Giving Among Anglo-Saxon Women,' *Medieval Prosopography,* Vol. 29, 2014, pp. 1-22, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/44946967>, [Accessed 7th May 2024], p. 1.

[56] Ibid, p. 5.

[57] Davies, 'Embroidery And The Embroidery Trade,' p. 41.

[58] Ibid, p. 42.

[59] Leyser, *Medieval Women,* p. 71.

[60] Leyser, *Medieval Women,* p. 71.

The height of English embroidery, occurring roughly between 1250 and 1350, came to be known as Opus Anglicanum, Latin for 'English Work.'[61] Embroiderers often worked under a chief embroiderer who would have been male or female. Arguably the most famous example of Opus Anglicanum, produced by nuns of Canterbury, is The Bayeux Tapestry, a masterpiece of embroidery commemorating the conquest of England by William Duke of Normandy over King Harold II of England, depicting the preparations for, planning of, and Battle of Hastings in 1066. The tapestry was commissioned and composed over months during the 1070s. William the Conqueror's half brother, Bishop Odo of Bayeux most likely ordered the tapestry, and he is portrayed in the piece acting alongside his brother in the conquest of England. Although Bayeux and Odo were in France, the tapestry was commissioned from and produced in England. Clarke proposes that Abbot Scolland, a monk of St. Michel and later abbot of St. Augustine's Abbey of Canterbury, designed the Bayeux Tapestry.[62] He also goes so far as to note other propositions of 'masterminds' behind the tapestry's creation including Turold the Dwarf, Turold the Tall, and, most notably a woman, Queen Matilda.[63] In France, the tapestry is still called by some the work of Queen Matilda, the wife of William the Conqueror, and her ladies. Some proposed Queen Edith, wife of Edward I, and her ladies as responsible for the tapestry. Women would commission items as equally as men, especially women of great power. The tapestry is important in and of itself, but what is also of note is that it was produced by women.



Figure Eighteen: Artist Unknown, Embroidery from *The Bayeux Tapestry* [Wool on Linen] (c. 1066-1077) <www.bayeuxmuseum.com> (Accessed: 23 November 2022).

England during the high Medieval period was know as the center of embroidery production, with countries across the continent ordering and commissioning the most prized embroidered pieces from England. Nuns were highly skilled and produced decorations for the church and dress for the clerics. Evidence of English embroidery's worth can be seen over Europe as examples turn up in the courts and churches throughout the continent. Stylistic influence was carried through trade and conquest, notably from the Crusades, with similarities

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[61] Opus Anglicanum was known for its meticulous skill of needlework often incorporating gold and silver threads in addition to jewels and pearls adorning velvet or linen cloth. The word embroidery is a Frankish/Germanic word meaning 'braid' or 'embellishment.' The work was time consuming with some pieces taking years to complete. Individual commissions would have been paid one of two ways, either by the time it took to complete a piece or by an assessed value of the completed piece. The designs would have been sketched by an artist. The embroiderers would then be tasked with transferring these patterns or scenes onto the final piece. This could be done by either embroidering the design directly onto the cloth being used for the commissioned item or embroidering the design onto a separate piece of cloth then stitched to the material of the final product. Elaborate embroidery pieces that included many threads and adornments may have had substantial weight, requiring the fine cloth of the commissioned item to be backed with a secondary cloth, usually of linen, for support and reinforcement.

[62] Howard B. Clarke, 'The Identity Of The Designer Of The Bayeux Tapestry,' *Anglo-Norman Studies,* Vol. 35, 2013. p. 122.

[63] Ibid.

in the iconography of religious commissions and in the decorative themes associated with secular decor. Women, producing items, would have gathered influence and knowledge from examples delivered from the Far and Middle East.

Evidence of women working in guilds and at various occupations gave them power, even if it be limited to the family guild or an occupation approved by her family. Figure Nineteen depicts women combing and spinning wool in a space together, decorated with an embroidered wall hanging. Crowston mentions that the presence of women increased the number of workers, becoming a source of 'strength' for guilds.[64] Normington states that women could enter guilds, 'usually as wives and only occasionally as *femmes soles.'*[65] Davies mentions the businesswoman Rosa Romayn, wife of the alderman John of Burford who, during the early fourteenth century, ran the family business upon her husband's death. She was so successful that at the time of her death she held tenements in London in addition to country estates in Surrey, Kent, and Sussex and a country home in Cherletone and had a chapel built at St. Thomas the Apostle in Vintry Ward.[66]



Figure Nineteen: MS 33, f. 56r., Giovanni Boccaccio, *Carding And Spinning, Des Clères Et Nobles Femmes* [Illumination on Parchment] (c. 1470) <digitalcollections.nypl.org> (Accessed: 5 January 2023).

Families of the same career often intermarried. If a daughter came from the family of an embroiderer, she would often marry into a family of embroiderers. Being raised in the family of a given guild and practicing within that trade, a woman of marrying age became a commodity among marrying men of the same or similar trade. Crowston states that women marrying into a family of equal or comparable skills would give the new husband 'a corporate status he may otherwise never have possessed. Raised in the trade, she had considerable technical skills and a strong grasp of commercial practices and guild politics. She would possess intimate knowledge of the clients and credit suppliers that her husband hoped to inherit.'[67] Marrying among guilds could be as calculated an affair as marrying among the upper classes.

An area seemingly monopolized by women was silk production. Silk from silk worms being utilized in fabric making originated in China more than 8,500 years ago. During the sixth century, it is rumored that monks under orders from the Emperor Justinian stole silkworm eggs, bringing them to Byzantium, thereby beginning silk production in Europe. The ability to cultivate silk spreads into Italy during the ninth century when mulberry trees are better able to be cultivated. Trade in silk spreads throughout the continent and into England. Monnas mentions the rise in trade of silk in the early fourteenth century seeing raw silk traded from China, through the Caspian Sea area, into Europe, through Paris, and on into London by mostly

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[64] Clare Crowston, 'Women, Gender, And Guilds In Early Modern Europe: An Overview Of Recent Research,' *International Review Of Social History,'* Vol. 53, Supplement 16: The Return Of The Guilds, 2008, pp. 19-44. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26405466>, [Accessed: 13th April 2023], p. 37.

[65] Normington, *Gender And Medieval Drama,* p. 27.

[66] Davies, 'Embroiderers And The Embroidery Trade,' p. 43.

[67] Crowston, 'Women, Gender, and Guilds In Early Modern Europe,' p. 41. It is of note that Power, *Medieval Women,* and Davies, 'Embroiderers And The Embroidery Trade,' agree that women and men of families of the same trade be wed for business sake.




Figure Twenty: MS Royal 16 Gv, f. 54v., Giovanni Boccaccio, *De Claris Mulieribus, Le Livre De Femmes Nobles Et Renom* [Illumination on Parchment] (c. 1440) <www.bl.uk> (Accessed: 5 January 2023).
A woman can be seen harvesting silk cocoons from a mulberry tree in the background while a second woman works diligently on weaving fabric in the foreground in this illumination from the pamphlet.

Venetian traders.[68] This fine fabric was used in clothing items in addition to decorative goods including wall hangings, cushions, and bed linens. Janega, Monnas, and Power among others have stated that silk production was done solely by women during the Medieval period. Davies also mentions wives of mercers, or cloth merchants, processing silk to make small items for profit.[69] Women of London would process the raw silk to make and sell the threads or continue the production into goods that would then be sold including 'fringes, ribbons, belts, and laces.'[70]

There exists no record of a guild or an application for a guild by silkwomen. Power, Janega, and Davies and Michael among others agree and discuss women of the silk trade taking on apprentices, competing for high status clientele, and managing all aspects of the silk trade from importing raw silk, turning that into thread, and producing the final product. Figure Twenty depicts women engaged in silk making from start to finish. Silk may perhaps have been the sole product exclusively produced and managed by women.

## V. From Midwife To Witchcraft

### A. Medieval Healthcare In Writing

Healthcare during the Medieval Period combined superstition, religion, and emerging sciences. Access to the level of healthcare depended upon social station, personal belief, and, where women were concerned, to a practitioner that was willing and able to take care of them. Men were hesitant and not always permitted to care for women, especially if they were men of the clergy. Women worked as healers, midwives, and surgeons, and they treated women in addition to men. As the Medieval Period moves on into the Early Modern Era, we see a shift from the respected healer and midwife to a classification of witch and outcast that leads to trials, executions, and publications such as the *Malleus Maleficarum.* Women delivered babies, treated illnesses, leached wounds, and founded hospitals, but why were they seen as lesser medical practitioners? They could not attend university, be granted medical licenses, nor participate in medical conferences.

Scholars, theologians, and philosophers of the Medieval Period relied upon and perpetuated ideals put forth by Greek and Roman classical thinkers such as Hippocrates, Galen, Plato, and Aristotle. Classical thoughts and mores by male philosophers were seen as the epitome of social order and thinking across many echelons of society. This included the understanding of men's and women's biology. Classical descriptions in medicine divide the nature of humans into the four humors as seen in Figure Twenty-one. The humors within the

[68] Davies and Michael, 'Introduction,' p. 9 -10.

[69] Davies, 'Embroiderers And The Embroidery Trade,' p. 41.

[70] Davies and Michael, 'Introduction,' p. 10.

human body are blood which is considered to be hot and wet, yellow bile which is hot and dry, black bile being dry and cold, and phlegm considered to be wet and cold. Men were often noted to contain more blood and yellow bile, therefore they tended to be more hot and dry than women, who were made up more of black bile and phlegm. Women were noted to be more wet and cold than their male counterparts, leaving them vulnerable to their urges, both sexually and morally. There exist tales of loose lipped, gossiping washer-women, temptress women seducing men and leading them into sin, menstruating women ridding themselves of excess blood to keep themselves cold, and so on.



Figure Twenty-one: Egerton 2572, ff. 51v. Artist Unknown, *The Humors, The Guidebook Of The Barber Surgeons Of York* [Illumination on Parchment] (1486) <www.bl.uk> (Accessed: 22 November 2022).

Popular notions of women during the Medieval Period include Galen's notion that women were seen classically as inverted men, being that every fetus began as male then females developed with their sex organs changed, the vagina becoming an inverted penis, the scrotum morphing into the uterus, and the ovaries converted from testes.[71] Plato argued that men and women were at times ruled by their sexual organs. He described the sexual organs as animals independent from the body, the man's being external while the woman's internal, yet them both being unruly with drives and desires set apart from the human host's own mind.[72] Janega notes Plato's discussion of the sexual organs as being malcontent, disrupting the complete body until they are appeased with the act of mating.[73] A woman's womb could be seen as wandering unless it is 'pinned down' inside the female body, heavy with pregnancy.[74] This being said, women were stereotyped to be sexually more voracious than men, not being able to control their sexual appetites and drive. Whether it be through the animal within their body craving the external animal of men's genitalia or their cold, wet nature yearning for the hot, dry nature of men, women were seen to be more impetuous and unable to control their urges. Being wet and cold, they desire a balance that can only be found by having sex with men, parasitizing their dry and hot nature This idea of lascivious nature drives the cases for witchcraft and the untrustworthiness and inferior nature of women in the later middle ages and beyond.

As popularized in the Bible when Eve was created from and as a companion to Adam, women were seen as inferior and a vessel used to perpetuate the human race. Procreation, during the Medieval Period, is highly desirable and the reason for sex and union of individuals. This burden falls heavy upon women. If a woman was unable to conceive, carry a child to term, or deliver a healthy child, the blame fell to her. The majority of reproductive treatment administered to women and, albeit to a lesser extent, men was delivered by a female practitioner. During the twelfth to thirteenth century, knowledge of conception or the failure of conception as the responsibilities of both man and woman began to spread, most notably by the author and medical practicer, Trota of Salerno.

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[71] Janega quoting Galen's *Medicus*, *The Once And Future Sex,* p. 12.

[72] Plato, *Timaeus,* 360BCE. Translated by Benjamin Jowett. < https://classics.mit.edu/Plato/timaeus.html> [Accessed 5th February 2023].

[73] Janega, *The Once And Future Sex,* p. 8 and Plato, *Timaeus.*

[74] Janega, *The Once And Future Sex,* p. 8.



Figure Twenty-Two: MS 544, Artist Unkown, *Trota, The Book Of Learned Medical Treatises* from the *Trotula* [Illumination on Parchment] (c. Early Fourteenth Century) <wellcomecollection.org> (Accessed: 22 November 2022).
A copy of an illumination of Trota.

Trota, who lived during the twelfth century and was educated and taught at the Medical School of Salerno in southern Italy, was a woman and, arguably, the first gynecologist. She may have contributed to what was known as the *Trotula,* a group of texts discussing women's medicine which remained popular and influential into the sixteenth century having been translated into Latin, Anglo-Norman, and Middle English.[75] Even if the major work of Trota was not hers or not solely her production, the notion that a woman did write it and was a successful woman of medicine is greatly important in a field occupied by men. While revolutionizing women's care, the *Trotula* does not abandon the ideas of the four humors nor the ideals put forth by the Bible. Just as the classical thinkers separated human nature into four humors as four elements, earth, wind, fire, and water, ruling over the natural order, Trota also begins her *Book On The Conditions Of Women* reflecting on the natures of men and women, even going so far as to state that she called on works by Hippocrates and Galen when discussing women's illnesses and their cures, 'with God's Help.'[76] In the work, Trota credits God with giving humans the 'freedom of reason and intellect' but continues with stating that their wish is to reproduce, creating future generations to perpetuate these gifts.[77] In order to do this, there exist the hot of men and the cold of women. Trota, just as her male former thinkers and contemporary physicians, utilized the ideas of the humors to explain much of the diseases that afflict woman, most notably any reproductive maladies or complications. Yet as a woman, she does not limit her explanation of the body and its functions to a woman's body; Trota freely discusses men's bodies and their functions. Trota compares menses in women to nocturnal emissions in men as a rid of excess humors.[78]

The *Trotula* acted as a guidebook for women containing medical advice in addition to the use of cosmetics. Power notes that '[a]ll women were expected to know something of family medicine, and it is noticeable that there existed various treatises of diseases of women specially worsen or translated for their use, with the plain assumption that they will be able to read.'[79] She goes on to quote a fourteenth century English translation's introduction "'women of our tongue do better read and understand this language than any other, and every woman lettered read it to other unlettered and help them and counsel them in their maladies withouten showing their disease to man, I have this drawn and written in English.'"[80] Women spread the practice of medicine among each other. Power notes other women of medicine in Paris, often inciting legal anger due to practicing without licenses because they were not permitted to

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[75] Leyser discussing Green, *Medieval Women,* p. 99.

[76] Trota, *The Trotula: An English Translation Of the Medieval Compendium Of Womens's Medicine,* Monica H. Green, editor, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt3fhj5p> [Accessed 8th February 2023], Section 2.

[77] Trota, *The Trotula,* Section 1.

[78] Trota, *The Trotula,* Section 3.

[79] Power, *Medieval Women,* p. 78.

[80] Power quoting from *The Trotula, Medieval Women,* p. 78.



Figure Twenty-three: Detail, Illuminated Manuscript, 12C. Hildegard Von Bingen, *Self Portrait, Scivias* [Illumination on Parchment] (c. 1151-1152) <kolbetimes.com> (Accessed: 15 November 2022).

obtain the proper licensure. Some of these women of Paris include Jacqueline Felicie de Almania, Belota the Jewess, Margaret of Ypres, and one Joanna.[81]

Trota and the women of Paris were not the only woman to have their medical knowledge and ideals noticed throughout Europe. A contemporary to Trota was Hildegard of Bingen, later to become a saint, who lived and worked during the twelfth century and founded monasteries in Rupertsberg and Eibingen. In addition to influencing medicine, Hildegard was revered for her visions, music, and theological input. Among her various texts exist two pertaining to medicine, including her own illuminations as depicted in figure twenty-three. *Physica* discusses flora, fauna, and stones as used in treatment of various ailments and maladies. *Causae et Curae,* attempts to explain the causes and cures for disease in addition to explaining the human body. Hildegard, a noted healer, attracted visits from lay people in addition to higher class individuals and those of royal status. Sweet discusses Hildegard, still reliant on classical and religious ideals, translating the notion of elements to agricultural importance, balancing the fertility of the land with the amount of rain, wind, and sun as representing earth, water, air, and fire.[82] Hildegard also relies upon the four humors and their imbalance when applied to mental health. She discusses bloodletting and cupping in addition to medicinal herbs and foods as does Trota for the cures of diseases and other human afflictions. In contrast to the *Trotula*, which seems to have been composed of texts produced for the University of Salerno, therefore to teach and be put into circulation to educate medical practitioners, Sweet deduces that Hildegard wrote her texts to be utilized as medical books for her founded abbeys where no other library or texts were of access.[83] She serves as an example of a woman writing a text when no other are available.

## B. Healthcare In Practice

Barbers already accustomed to utilizing sharp tools for their trade, were also commonly responsible for surgery and were taught to use their razors in practices such as bloodletting. Being a barber or a surgeon was most often a man's occupation, yet there is record of women working this profession. Power states that 'women [are] explicitly mentioned as members among male masters, for example, in the craft gilds of barber-surgeons of York and London.'[84] Women were apprenticed alongside their male counterparts. Janega infers as much stating '[w]omen could join these guilds if they were the wives or daughters of medical practitioners or

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[81] Power, *Medieval Women,* p. 80.

[82] Victoria Sweet, 'Hildegard Of Bingen And The Greening Of Medieval Medicine,' *Bulletin Of The History Of Medicine,* Vol. 73, No. 3, Fall 1999, p. 381-403. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44445287?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents>, [Accessed 6th March 2023], p. 388 - 389.

[83] Ibid. p. 393.

[84] Power, *Medieval Women,* p. 52.



Figure Twenty-four: BL7344130. Aldobrandino Da Siena, *Woman Cupping, Le Régime De Corps* [Illumination on Parchment] (1256) <cudl.lib.ac.uk> (Accessed: 9 January 2023). This text a treatise on medicine produced in Provence, France and discusses in Latin the human body, diseases, and treatments.

had apprenticed with women in the field to learn the craft.'[85] In figure twenty-three, a female bater-surgeon is depicted administering a treatment of cupping to another woman. While the barber-surgeon was of a lesser status than the physician who attended upper classes and diagnosed maladies, the barber-surgeon was available to lesser classes to let the blood, lance wounds, or pull teeth, in addition to cutting hair.

As women were active in all branches of medicine, there is perhaps one area of medicine in which women were more noticed than men, and that is of the midwife. Men were not often permitted in the room where a woman was giving birth. This space was customarily reserved for women and therefore female midwives as seen in figure twenty-five. Whereas there is a record of women working within the barber-surgeon guild, Green notes that there exists no evidence of midwives forming a guild or other formally organized institution.[86] Licensing did not begin until the mid fifteenth century to keep women morally bound to their ethics.[87]

Midwives were not limited to birthing children or even in matters solely regarding pregnancy. Many midwives acted as doctors and healers of general health to the community, women, children, and, perhaps, men. They doled out aide to minor diseases and distresses, advised on conception and fertility, and performed such acts as abortions and cesareans. In figure twenty-six, a midwife is depicted performing a cesarean section, acting as the barber-surgeon performing an operation in the birthing chamber.

Public recognition and space for a midwife to practice would rely heavily on a population. If she attended to pregnant women alone, there would have to be a significant number of women to support such a full time endeavor. Since limited written record on midwifery remains, is it over-presumptuous to assume that to be a midwife, the skills were passed along orally from woman to woman and in practice, women watching and assisting women? Green argues, noting that men read, produced books, and described how a thing such as birth should proceed but women practiced it, talked about the process and its difficulties, and



Figure Twenty-five: Royal 2 B VII f. 48. Artist Unknown, Illumination from *The Queen Mary Psalter* [Illumination on Parchment] (c. 1310-1320) <www.bl.uk> (Accessed: 22 November 2022). Image of midwives attending a birth.

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[85] Janega, *The Once And Future Sex,* p. 170.

[86] Monica Green, 'Women's Medical Practice And Health Care In Medieval Europe,' *Signs,* Vol. 14, No. 2, Woking Together In The Middle Ages: Perspectives On Women's Communities, Winter 1989, p. 434-473. <https:www.jstor.org/stable/3174557?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents>, [Accessed 28th October 2022], p. 450.

[87] Ibid.



Figure Twenty-six: Royal Ms. 16 G VII, fol. 219. Artist Unknown, Illumination from the *Deeds Of The Romans* [Illumination on Parchment] (Compiled c. 1300).
This illumination from France depicts the birth of Julius Caesar via cesarean section.

could relate to each other.[88] Women were entrusted with ensuring the safe delivery of the next generation and life of the mother during a difficult time.

Bearing children during the Medieval Period would have been quite perilous.[89] The danger of miscarriage was also quite high. Limited abilities to quell bleeding, manipulate the fetus in the birth canal, or induce labor led to this heightened danger. With men being limited in their access to the birthing chamber, much care was entrusted to women. Midwives were known to administer various herbs and ointments to aide birth. The *Trotula* contains guidance when the fetus is presented in a position that may be difficult for the mother to give birth. Midwives also attempted cesarean sections, but mainly when the mother had passed and an attempt was made to cut out the infant in hopes of saving its life. In the case of the death of the infant, midwives would have been entrusted to ensure baptism. As Leyser notes, women were advised to confess before giving birth in the chance they may die.[90] She goes on to note the importance of baptism upon a baby lest the child's unbaptized soul be condemned to limbo in contrast to baptized children that ascend to heaven.[91] 'Baptism was a sacrament which, in an emergency, could be bestowed by a lay man or woman; it was a duty therefore incumbent on all midwives in cases where the child seemed unlikely to survive. There was no need to wait until the baby was fully delivered; if there seemed the slightest likelihood of a stillbirth, then any protruding limb could be baptized. Priests were to ensure that midwives understood this; that clean water was available in case the ceremony became necessary and that they knew the correct forms of words.'[92] A cesarean could be performed when the mother had died in order to baptize the dying infant.[93] Cesareans, being a surgery, could be performed by barber-surgeons, but most often fell to the midwife to attempt.[94]

## C. Organized Medical Care

Most women had little access to hospitals for care during the Medieval Period. Travel to hospitals would have been slow and difficult, but they did exist as spaces for women to find care, refuge, and employment. Hospitals did not provide extensive medical care but were associated with religious houses and were places where those down on their luck or pilgrims

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[88] Ibid, p. 459.

[89] Dying due to complications was the number one cause of female mortality from roughly the fifth to eleventh centuries if not before and beyond. Up to twenty percent of women died, and infant mortality, not including still births, is estimated to have been between thirty and fifty percent.

[90] Leyser, *Medieval Women,* p. 125.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid, p. 126.

[93] Ibid, p. 125.

[94] Ibid, p. 126.

could have a bed and meal. As the Medieval Period progressed, hospitals with a focus on medicine began to arise in and near universities. These places would have been closed to women as university education was limited to men. Yet hospitals did employ women as midwives and nurses. As Janega notes, women wanting to work in the medical profession and within a hospital would have become nuns; nuns alongside monks aided the sick, administered 'cloister medicine,' and 'copied medical texts as well as religious and philosophical ones' leading them to be 'reasonably current with medical learning.'[95]

Women were practicing medicine and doing so on unequal footing. A woman would only have been able to work as a barber-surgeon, midwife, pharmacist, or the like as she was apprenticed to do. Yet women working in the field would have been a necessity. Men were forbidden to touch a woman to physically examine her, thus women would have been necessary as medical practitioners to guarantee the health and wellness of the female members of society, those responsible for producing and raising the next members of that society. Their rates of income reflected a divide in education and in their subjugation. Women historically earn less than men, and that was no different in the practice of medicine during the Medieval Period. Yet these lesser paid individuals would have been in high demand. A female healer, midwife, or barber-surgeon would have charged less for treatment than a practicing male physician.

As the Medieval Period progressed towards the Modern Era and Christianity spread as did Classical ideas and teachings, constraints and taboos were placed upon women in medicine. Religious discrimination abounded, limiting women practicing medicine on those of their own religion. The church also admonished some of the naturalistic healings most often practiced by women. Green notes new laws being enacted in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as restricting women's practice formally. In 1329, a law limits women to practicing only on fellow women and children so long as they do not administer any 'potion,' and in 1421, women were not to identify themselves or practice as a physician.[96] In addition to private practicing women, nuns as nurses also had restrictions. While they could copy medical texts and tend to the sick, they were limited to who they cared and for how long. Janega's research revealed that more monks than nuns worked within religious hospitals and that nuns were suspect to fall into 'sexual sin' working with male patients and alongside men.[97] Few images of nuns exist from the Medieval Period, but, as the archeological existence of hospitals associated with abbeys proves, nuns were active in the medical field.

### D. Menses And Abortion As Health Care

During turbulent and uncertain times when patrimony and ideals of inheritance were being cemented, the certainty of parentage needed to be confirmed without a doubt and suspicions of women performing manipulative acts was rising. Harris-Stoertz states '[t]here seems to be a pervasive fear of what evil women might do through their control of the birthing process. Women were portrayed as untrustworthy tricksters, apt to take advantage of any special concessions granted to them, or to falsify pregnancies, or to foist bastard children on their husbands, or even to kill their own children. Thus, while the Medieval birthing chamber was arguably more a woman's world in cultures other than western, the root of some of the concerns that led the male medical establishment to take over the birthing process in later

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[95] Janega, *The Once And Future Sex,* p. 168 - 169.

[96] Green, *Women's Medical Practice And Health Care In Medieval Europe,* p. 448 - 449.

[97] Janega, *The Once And Future Sex,* p. 169.

centuries are clearly evident.'[98] Law codes enacted during the high and late Middle Ages favored the unborn child and thus cast suspicious light on the women present in the birthing chambers.

Women's health in the bedroom was women's business, including menstruation, conception, birth, and abortions. In women's bodies, an expression of excess humors was believed to have taken place with menstruation. Once the womb was rid of excess blood and fluids, it was seen as empty and could then be more likely to be impregnated. Van de Walle notes that numerous reasons existed for women to seek out the herbs and rituals that would bring on menstruation, as a block in the release and excess build up of these fluids not only hindered conception but could lead to any number of maladies of a woman, notably hysteria.[99] Menopause sets on with little warning, and women desiring to still produce children may have sought out the guidance of a woman practitioner for the herbs in hope of reigniting their bodies to produce a child. In addition, excessive menstruation was also blamed for illnesses. Hildegard suggested natural remedies through the use of plants in aiding conception but also in encouraging menstruation and expelling the afterbirth. Hildegard's herbal remedies aided women in controlling their menses in addition to abortive uses.

The most sought after reason for desiring menstruation is to abort an unwanted pregnancy. Virginity, as has already been discussed, was highly prized during the Medieval Period when selecting a bride. The dangers of abduction and rape were very real, and pregnancies not doubt resulted from such violent instances. But liaisons between consenting individuals out of wed lock resulted in unwanted outcomes. To protect her virginity, a woman could not seek out the medical advice from a male practitioner.

Nuns would also have found themselves in such predicaments, living in double monasteries and in interactions with men. Hildegard was a learned abbess overseeing numerous women, would they have sought her aid in such a difficult time? It is certain that individuals that have taken holy vows were not so strict with their vow of chastity, as has been recorded in the instance of Abelard and Heloise. Callan presents the miracle performed by Irish male Saint Áed mac Bricc during the sixth century, who, when visiting a nunnery, discovered a 'consecrated virgin' pregnant after having an illicit affair.[100] 'St. Áed blessed her womb, and at once the baby [*infans*] in her womb disappeared as if it did not exist.'[101] Callan goes on to discuss additional Irish saints that could miraculously induce abortion in addition to St. Áed, including Ciarán of Saigir, Clinch of Aghaboe, and Brigid of Kildare.[102] Surprisingly, three of these saints were men who, through various miraculous intervention, rid the wombs of women of unwanted fetuses.[103] The one female saint, Brigid of Kildare (c. 451 - c. 525), is said to have performed 'abortion miracle[s] [that included] sparing the woman "childbirth or its

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[98] Fiona Harris-Stoertz, 'Pregnancy And Childbirth In Twelfth- And Thirteenth-Century French And English Law,' *Journal Of The History Of Sexuality,* Vol. 21, No. 2, Approaches To Childbirth In The Middle Ages, May 2012, pp. 263-281, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41475080?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents>, [Accessed 21st November 2021], p. 266.

[99] Etienne Van De Walle, 'Flowers And Fruits: Two Thousand Years Of Menstrual Regulation,' *The Journal Of Interdisciplinary History,* Vol. 28, No. 2, Autumn 1997, pp. 183-203, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/206401>, [Accessed 21st November 2021], p. 186.

[100] Maeve B. Callan, 'Of Vanishing Fetuses And Maidens Made-Again: Abortion, Restored Virginity, And Similar Scenarios In Medieval Irish Hagiography And Penitentials,' *Journal Of The History Of Sexuality,* Vol. 21, No. 2, Approaches To Childbirth In The Middle Ages, May 2012, pp. 282-296, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41475081>, [Accessed 21st November 2021], p. 290.

[101] Ibid, pp. 290-291.

[102] Ibid, p. 289.

[103] Ibid, pp 289-291.

pangs"' in addition to 'offer[ing] an array of miracles for every stage of the pregnancy process, from facilitating conception to soothing sore nipples to ensuring the safety of a disabled child, concerns that are marginal or altogether absent in the accounts of male abortionist saints.'[104]

Abortion was a true concern, not only in preserving one's virginity but in times of health or economic strife when a new child just could not be sustained. Van de Walle quotes the Anglo-Norman translation of the *Practice Brevis*, a medical book from Salerno, by Johannes II Pltearius written in the twelfth century which compares a fetus begot quickly after the birth of a child to a toad that must be rid from the womb.[105] It was believed that a child conceived too closely after a birth would 'capture the woman's blood that should normally be turned into milk to feed the newborn.'[106] Families, primarily those of lower classes, needed to take into consideration their ability to care for and provide for their children. The majority of the population were considered peasants, people with limited means when a child may not have always been a blessing. Pregnancy was dangerous, and a woman would have assessed her health and that of her family. Abortion may have been a gentler choice rather than infanticide. Callan presents a tale of Laegachan and his wife whereupon he goes out in search of food leaving his pregnant wife at home. 'He advised her that, if she should bear the child before he returned, she should kill it, since she could not provide for it. She bore a son in his absence, and her one companion, a woman, asked what she wanted to be done with the child. "Kill it" was her reply.'[107] This child has a more positive outcome, as the woman convinces the wife to bring it to a church whereupon it was cared for, but for some women this was not a viable option.

Abortion and infanticide were not without their punishment. Penance and being exiled from church occurred. Even practicing contraception was considered unnatural from use of herbs or in *coitus interruptus* as noted by Leyser.[108] Penance was based upon the degree of sin as decreed by the church. Contraception carried the lesser punishment, abortion pre and post quickening carried differing sentences as did infanticide and the sex of the child. In the case of sex workers, the penance was lighter than that of the married woman. Leyser notes that poverty also was 'regarded as some kind of excuse for the use of contraceptives.'[109] She goes on to say 'What [would not be condoned was] abortion; this is a practice proscribed in thirteenth-century England by both canon and civil law, though, given the choice in *The Sickness of Women* between the life of the child and the life of the mother, it is the mother who is to be saved.'[110] In 1588, Pope Sixtus V declared that abortion at any stage was considered homicide in addition to sin.

## E. From Healthcare To Witchcraft

As a culmination in the dangers of women working within medicine in the later Medieval Period leading into the Early Modern, was the belief and accusations of women medical practitioners of witchcraft. With the publication of the *Malleus Maleficarum* in 1486, written by the German Catholic clergyman Heinrich Kramer, women were cast in a demonic light, aiding the devil against mankind and sealing these pacts with sexual acts. Suspicion of working

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[104] Callan, 'Of Vanishing Fetuses And Maidens Made-Again,' p. 291.

[105] Van De Walle, 'Flowers And Fruits,' p. 189.

[106] Ibid.

[107] Callan, 'Of Vanishing Fetuses And Maidens Made-Again,' p. 288.

[108] Leyser, *Medieval Women,* p. 104.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Ibid.

women grew. This does not end women practicing, and, as Janega notes, women carry on in the field as midwives for centuries to come.[111]

Situations where medicine could not ensure the cure or survival of a patient, the loss of a child or wife in childbirth, or any one of the numerous negative outcomes of the limited medical allowances of women were cause of concern for that medical practitioner as rumors and suspicions of witchcraft began to multiply and arise freely in late Medieval society. In addition to the publishing and spreading of the *Malleus Maleficarum,* formal licensing of midwives began to occur with regulations passed by secular and religious authorities.[112] According to the *Malleus Maleficarum*, midwives that also identify as witches 'kill infants both in the womb and at birth, and are even in the habit of stealing, vampire-like, into homes to drink the blood of children. Worse still, even when they do not kill the children they deliver, witch-midwives devote them to the devil, dooming them to a life of evil.'[113] Janega and Green note the negative and damning effects of the *Malleus Maleficarum* on female healers of all occupations, especially for those women assisting in any sort of abortions; women who 'kill infants in the womb' are most definitely witches.[114] These accusations may have limited how many women entered the field of medicine out of fear or restriction, but were not a deterrent enough to keep women from practicing their craft altogether.



Figure Twenty-seven: BL Royal 16 MS 16 g vi. Artist Unknown, *Witches Burnt, Les Grandes Chronicles De France* [Illumination on Parchment] (Fourteenth Century) <www.bl.uk> (Accessed: 6 January 2023).
The detailed image depicts the torture and various executions of witches from being placed in pillories, tied to a stake and being beaten, to being burned at the stake during a sixth century witch trial.

Illuminations perpetuated the idea of witches and instilled fear with depictions of the painful torture and punishment brought upon women accused of and convicted as witches. In Figure Twenty-seven, King Chilperic and Queen Fredegund torture and execute healers that live in and came to Paris during a dysentery outbreak. Upon the death of their young son to the disease, it was ordered that healers, now marked as sorcerers and witches, be rounded up, tortured, and executed. The account and the image do not solely denote witches as women; men can be seen clearly alongside the women, accused of these crimes. This illumination also notes that witches were not an invention of late the late Medieval Period, but also were feared during many stages of the Middle Ages.

To become a witch, women had to associate with the devil, often through fornication. The devil is depicted as male and uses women's lust against them, and through a pact sealed

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[111] Janega, *The Once And Future Sex,* p. 172.

[112] Monica Green, 'Women's Medical Practice And Health Care In Medieval Europe,' p. 450.

[113] Hans Peter Broedel, *The Malleus Maleficarum And The Construction Of Witchcraft: Theology And Popular Belief,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 27.

[114] Ibid.



Figure Twenty-eight: Cotton MS Tiberius A VII/1. Guillaume de Deguileville, Copied by John Ludgate, *Satan Instructs Witches, Le Pèlerinage De La Vie Humaine* [Illumination on Cotton Parchment] (Copied c. 1425-1450) <www.bl.uk> (Accessed: 6 January 2023).
The image depicts Satan assisting witches. Two women stir a potion while another woman steals a baby from an unsuspecting mother.

with sex, locks the women into performing his evil deeds upon unsuspecting members of society. Figure Twenty Eight depicts a group of women preparing a draught in the presence of the devil, easily identified by his hairy body and horns. These rituals often occur in the out of doors, a place unsuitable for women to be on their own as previously discussed. Yet with the restrictions placed upon women to practice medicine, many healers may have continued their occupation in spaces out of the public gaze.

Women may have embraced the restrictions placed upon their sex. Green puts forth this theory.[115] It was not seen as customary or acceptable for men to physically examine a woman and Green notes that she did not come across any evidence of a man examining a woman in a gynecological manner. She also notes that due to modesty and comfort, women may preferred to have consulted a female practitioner.[116] Women were vey much still in demand in the medical field and continued to work alongside men. The images and texts regarding women as witches were most likely produced by men, men of the clergy. As has been noted repeatedly, the church sought to quell the rights of women and where they could be seen.

## VI. Conclusion

Leyser makes an argument for women having more power and the ability to make a living for themselves in an easier manner before the Conquest. She makes the argument that Anglo-Saxon women could hold lands and make wills in contrast with Anglo-Norman women who cold not in addition to the fragility of queenship and rank of noble women when Normans swept through England, doing away with the many smaller kingdoms that dotted the land and uniting it into a much larger kingdom.[117] This quelling of women's rights trickled down into the working classes. The Normans, to a greater extent, more rapidly spread Christianity than it had been spread pre-Conquest. Before the Conquest, England had been ravaged and changed by Vikings, and there existed more paganism than post-Conquest. Christianity, as has been discussed, has a negative notion of women that permeated through Medieval society. Women's place and ability to make a living was being threatened. This is not to say that women were quelled altogether; they were not. Employment was open and expected of every member of Medieval society. Bardsley notes a 1349 Ordinance of Labourers issuing forth that all able-bodied individuals under the age of sixty must work unless already engaged in a trade or owning enough land to occupy their time and supply them with an income.[118] It was not

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[115] Green, 'Women's Medical Practice And Health Care In Medieval Europe,' p. 468 - 469.

[116] ibid, p. 469.

[117] Leyser, *Medieval Women,* pp. 74 - 75.

[118] Sandy Bardsley, 'Women's Work Reconsidered: Gender And Wage Differentiation In Late Medieval England,' *Past & Present,* No. 165, Nov. 1999, pp. 3-29, <https://www.jstor/stable/651283>, [Accessed 5th October 2022], p. 20.

uncommon for women to carry on running their husband's businesses after they had passed. It is noted that men even deeded their businesses to their wives in their wills. Women worked alongside men in every aspect of daily life and knew the businesses just as well, but they may have been paid less and not permitted to own as much.

As the Medieval period progressed into the later years, men's names became more synonymous with the trade of embroidery and women's names disappear from the archives, notably from remaining records of existing businesses and their transactions. Most likely women worked under these men or even in place of them, but the man's name would have been associated with the final resulting product, whether that be the name of the woman's husband, close male relative, or business owner. Oftentimes women were not compensated as highly for their work as men were, or they would have to pay a man as a middleman to trade their wares on their behalf. Where there were vast amounts of money to be made, there existed men taking over these businesses. When the trade no longer was a craft or created for personal use and individuals of power began to notice and covet these goods, men used the advantage of their stations and usurped women's power. Janega agrees with this in her book as do the authors of articles within the compilation *English Medieval Embroidery.*[119] The embroidery business can be seen as an area in which women's voices were silenced and their control stripped from them as ecclesiastical beliefs overtook recognized societal business dealings. 'The embroiderers who have left a trail in the documentary evidence are often wealthy men of high social standing, and while they are unlikely to be typical of the whole craft, it is clear that the leading London practitioners had access to large sums of money.'[120] Also, men often occupied the upper echelon of wage earners, and the archives pertaining to upper classes are more likely to survive, meaning men.

Under Anglo-Norman laws, that which belonged to the wife or was produced by the wife was property of the husband or closest male relative. Women dominated the trade and appeared in documents into the early fourteenth century. Then their names seem to drop from the archives, being replaced more frequently by men, men who were named as mercers and broderers.[121] Women were squeezed out of the system only to remain as seamstresses and silk-women. Why is this? As mentioned prior, only a slim number of archives survive to this day. The shift in Anglo-Norman customs replacing Anglo-Saxon customs can be seen as one reason. Also the shift in the popularity of Christianity and its views on women. The popularity of the subjugation of women based upon classical theology spread by clerics and men took advantage and tied the women to their male run businesses thus erasing female names and replacing them with the names of the husbands or the heads of the businesses that women worked in. Laws from the courts were passed and dominated by the clergy and God-fearing leaders, and religion saw women as second to men. Therefore the goods they produced would be second class or unclean compared to that made by men. Thus needing their names to be replaced by a man's.

The spread of the Protestant Reformation and Martin Luther's *Ninety-Five Thesis,* during the sixteenth century also reduced the call for highly decorated and colorful goods, be they religious or of personal use. Styles of decor and dress changed dramatically as the Reformation swept Medieval Europe. Seen as indulgent, gluttonous, and an area of false worship, the highly colored and decorative style of the Romanesque and Gothic art and fashion gave way to a more simplistic style, noted by monochromic colors, whitewashed walls, and limited decor. The need for pearl and gem bedazzled embroidery upon richly hued silken fabrics was fading. This spread of the Reformation demarcates the end of the late Medieval Period, or the Renaissance, and the beginning of Early Modern Periods in Europe. As the

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[119] Janega, *The Once And Future Sex,* p. 165, and Davies, 'Embroiderers And The Embroidery Trade,' p. 43.

[120] Kate Heard, 'Ecclesiastical Embroidery In England From 1350 To The Reformation,' *English Medieval Embroidery,* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), pp. 77-90, p. 81.

[121] Davies, 'Embroiderers And The Embroidery Trade,' p. 43.

Medieval period progressed, there became a noticeable decline in the consumption and therefore production of English embroidery. As is the case in production of popular goods, the quality of embroidery began to falter due to less expensive raw materials utilized and faster yet not as meticulous craftsmanship being employed. As Davies states, embroidery was not only produced in London or by skilled artisans; other craftspeople produced work which was in turn sold outside of major cities under the label of these highly revered artists.[122] Consumers, noticing the inferior quality began to consume less. In addition, styles began to change more rapidly, manufacturing became more efficient if not to the previous standards but on a larger scale, and trade increased with the continent due to more and better sea-faring vessels. The market was changing.

The negative religious fervor driven by men of the church spills over into women's lives insofar as to limit them in the spaces they may work and dwell safely, pushing them from the occupations they had prospered performing, and subjugating them to second class citizen in their own lives. From the dissolution of double monasteries to the negative views of women in the Bible and among revived Classical theology, the men of Christianity drove the stereotypes and secular laws that bloomed as the Medieval Period pressed on.

[122] Davies, 'Embroiderers And The Embroidery Trade,' p.46.

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