

# GENDER, BODY AND PARENTHOOD IN MUSCOVITE RUSSIA

Rosemary Jane Finlinson

Fitzwilliam College, University of Cambridge  
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## DECLARATION

This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. I further state that no substantial part of my thesis has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution except as declared in the Preface and specified in the text. It does not exceed the limit of 80,000 words set by the Degree Committee of the Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages and Linguistics.

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# ABSTRACT

## Gender, Body and Parenthood in Muscovite Russia

Rosemary Jane Finlinson

In Muscovite Russia, political power was often articulated through the image of the ruler and his family. Ideologies of family were crucial to the cultural envisioning of dynastic legitimacy and social order. Beginning from the sixteenth century, under the cultural influence of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, conventions for representing the body and human reproduction in Russian literature underwent a transformation. There was a proliferation of scientific and medical literature, on the one hand, and poetry, on the other hand. As a result, ideologies of family came to be expressed across a new range of textual genres. Focussing on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this thesis explores how ideological constructions of parenthood shape and are shaped by changing forms of conceptualising and representing the gendered body. In so doing, it underscores the need to interrogate modern assumptions about sex to recognise the variable signification and significance of the body in early modern Russian gender ideologies.

The first chapter is broadly theoretical. It destabilises the modern relationship between anatomy and gender by looking at the construction of sex in Muscovite medical discourse. In this writing, anatomy is depicted as being in communication with social forces. Correspondingly, visions of bodily difference are formed in the interaction of the body with existing social norms and hierarchies: namely, masculine authority and feminine subservience and responsibility for childrearing. This social gender hierarchy was maintained through the regulation of bodily *practices* (breastfeeding and growing a beard) rather than by an idea of sex as a fixed anatomical binary. I demonstrate the instability of the body in Muscovite definitions of masculinity and femininity by exploring how breastfeeding was consolidated as a gender marker and the beard was lost in seventeenth-century ecclesiastical debates about gender.

The remaining chapters demonstrate the importance of literary factors in shaping the construction of parenthood and the gendered body over this period. The second chapter analyses the sixteenth-century *Stepennaia Kniga*, a royal genealogical history which utilises depictions of parenthood to embed patriarchal authority in the dynastic and ecclesiastical establishments. The text does not clearly differentiate between mothers and fathers in terms of anatomy or behaviour. Instead, the behaviour of both parents is aligned with that of ruler and priest, and their competence as parents is expressed in how well they embody those patriarchal roles. The mother's subordinate position is established through her inability to perform regal and ecclesiastical tropes associated with parenthood and as a result mothers do not play a central role in the text's depiction of parenthood. In the *Stepennaia Kniga*, parenthood is embodied primarily by fathers.

The third chapter examines how parenthood came to be embodied by mothers in seventeenth-century poetry about the family. It posits that the figurative language characteristic of emergent Baroque verse cultivated novel relationships between body and gender. Although the principle of feminine subservience did not change, it was now embedded in the flesh of the mother through the development of a discourse of maternal suffering. Through metaphor, allegory and emblem, ideas of parental love, sacrifice and caregiving were tied to maternal body parts and processes specifically: the *utroba*, childbirth and breastfeeding. The maternal body thus came to represent both parents,

creating a new and distinctly gendered vision of parental love. As the century developed, this gendered vision of love was extended beyond the context of parenthood. The suffering maternal body was cast as an emblem of Christian sacrifice more broadly.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

|          |   |
|----------|---|
| AN SSSR  | <i>Akademiia nauk soiūza sovetskikh sotsialisticheskikh respublik</i>         |
| BLDR     | <i>Biblioteka literatury drevnei Rusi</i>                                     |
| GIM      | <i>Gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii muzei</i>                                    |
| IRLI RAN | <i>Institut russkoi literatury (Pushkinskii Dom) Rossiiskoi akademii nauk</i> |
| PLDR     | <i>Pamiatniki literatury drevnei Rusi</i>                                     |
| PMLA     | <i>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</i>             |
| PSRL     | <i>Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei</i>                                     |
| RGADA    | <i>Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnikh aktov</i>                       |
| RH       | <i>Russian History</i>  |
| RNB      | <i>Rossiiskaia natsional'naia biblioteka</i>                                  |
| RGB      | <i>Rossiiskaia gosudarstvennaia biblioteka</i>                                |
| SK       | <i>Stepennaia kniga</i>   |
| TODRL    | <i>Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoi literatury</i>                                  |

## NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND ORTHOGRAPHY

In this thesis I use the modified Library of Congress system for transliteration from Cyrillic, in accordance with MHRA guidelines. All Slavonic names are transliterated according to the modified Library of Congress system (so Epifanii Premudryi, not Epiphanius the Wise, for example). The only exceptions to this are words which are commonly accepted in another form (so I use Rus, not Rus'). I render all Old Slavonic texts into modern Russian orthography, so 'ѣ' becomes 'е' and 'і' becomes 'и'.

## INTRODUCTION

<sup>1</sup> The perceived relationship between nature and culture in public consciousness is fraught at the best of times, and nowhere is this more heightened than in the case of parenthood. Motherhood and fatherhood occupy an ambiguous position at the juncture of the biological and the social. The seemingly obvious reproductive division of people into two categories: women; who have babies, and men; who do not, particularly encourages essentialist ideas about what is ‘natural’ or ‘inherent’ for men and women more broadly. Gendered divisions in parenting behaviour and responsibility can appear to flow naturally from physical differences in genitalia and reproductive roles. Women are often understood as ‘natural’ caregivers, instinctively more geared towards parenthood than men, and such assumptions often hinge on references to maternal biology (hormones, capacity to carry a child and to breastfeed, and so on).

However, in recent years social changes in the structure of the family and the development of new reproductive technologies have challenged the definition of parenthood in the cultural imagination. IVF, surrogacy and genetic engineering all combine to call into question the previously seemingly self-evident biological underpinnings of motherhood and fatherhood. The former divisions between nature and culture start to blur as the maternal body, once considered the predominant recourse to the ‘natural’, becomes ever more clearly shaped by social and medical intervention. In turn, cultural ‘truths’ about men and women that have been constructed on the back of maternal and paternal biology are also called into question. At this cultural moment, studies of parenthood in the early modern world have particular relevance, because this historical era witnessed a similarly intense period of scientific and cultural innovation that likewise impacted existing conceptions of body and gender.

Despite the fact that it plays such an undeniably large part in conceptions of gender roles, the body has often been left out of studies of the history of parenthood. This is partly due to the inherent methodological difficulties associated with studying the history of embodiment, and partly due precisely to the afore-mentioned prevailing idea that the body is gender’s ‘natural’ base. What is assumed in the designation of

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<sup>1</sup> Referencing follows the MHRA system.

‘naturalness’ is that the body is somehow prior to or outside culture, and therefore doesn’t change. This allows for the historical and cultural variability of the relationship between the body and gender roles to be often overlooked. Yet, how people have historically perceived bodily difference and how these differences shape their ideas about men and women is by no means timeless or self-evident. The Muscovites, similarly to other early modern European peoples, did not have the same understanding of human anatomy and of sexual reproduction as we do. It follows, then, that reproduction didn’t play the same role in their understanding of gender roles, including parenthood. This thesis historicises the role of the body in ideologies of motherhood and fatherhood in early modern Russia of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a period during which the symbolic role of the family was being renegotiated against a backdrop of scientific and literary change.

Muscovite Russia in the sixteenth century was a patrilineal society characterised by the centralisation of State apparatus and the consolidation of patriarchal power.<sup>2</sup> Ivan IV was crowned the first Tsar of Muscovy in 1547 by Metropolitan Makarii, and during his reign pursued a number of imperial campaigns to expand the borders of his Orthodox state.<sup>3</sup> Alongside this, the Church and political elite launched a series of identity-building literary projects, seeking to consolidate autocratic rule and unite dynastic, religious and territorial ambitions.<sup>4</sup> One key feature of such projects was a preoccupation with lineage, genealogy and with the conduct and symbolic significance of the Muscovite ruling family. In the seventeenth century, against the backdrop of major political and religious disruption, including a fifteen-year interregnum period and a mid-century schism between the official Muscovite Church and Old Believer sects, the focus on lay (as opposed to

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<sup>2</sup> I use the term ‘Muscovite Russia’ broadly to refer to the lands of the pre-modern polities of Muscovite Rus (Muscovy) and the Tsardom of Russia which had its centre in Moscow from the late 13<sup>th</sup> century until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when these lands became part of the Russian Empire.

<sup>3</sup> S. Bogatyrev, ‘Ivan IV (1533-1584)’, in *The Cambridge History of Russia Volume I: From Early Rus' to 1689*, ed. by Maureen Perrie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 245.

<sup>4</sup> Such projects institutionalised and regulated Muscovite life in a wide range of ways, among others: legally, as in the case of the *Stoglav* a collection of rules passed by the 1551 Church council to regulate canon law and ecclesiastical life; historically, as in the case of the *Stepennaia kniga* (1550s) and *Litsevoi letopisnyi svod* (1560s-70s), two extensive chronicle compendia relating Muscovite history; ecclesiastically, as in the case of the *Velikie chet'i minei*, a comprehensive hagiographic compendium overseen by Metropolitan Makarii in the second third of the sixteenth century; and domestically, as in the case of the *Domostroi*, the first Muscovite household manual (first half of the sixteenth century).

monastic) morality intensified in Muscovite written culture and depictions of family life become more prolific.<sup>5</sup>

Running parallel to this were two further trajectories of cultural change; one scientific and one literary. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed the dawn of the so-called ‘Scientific Revolution’ across Europe, when advances in human anatomy, physics, chemistry, mathematics and astronomy started to transform society’s views about the body and the natural world. Concomitantly, Muscovy also saw the nascent beginnings of a more prolific scientific discourse on the body. The first apothecary (*apteka*) opened in the Moscow Kremlin in 1581, and the Apothecary Chancellery (*Aptekarskii Prikaz*) was established in 1620. This is a transitional period when new scientific knowledge was being transmitted into Muscovy and medical literature of various kinds was starting to proliferate, but anatomy and medicine had not yet been formalised as native disciplines, resulting in an absence of firm disciplinary boundaries and consistent nomenclature.

Alongside the transmission of scientific knowledge, currents of intellectual thought and new forms of textual and artistic production entered seventeenth-century Muscovy from the Belarusian, Ukrainian and Polish West. Baroque literature, poetry and art gave aesthetic and cultural expression to the current natural-philosophical fascination with the human body, and in Muscovy this merged with the contemporary preoccupation with family to redefine gender roles in literary production. For these reasons, the late Muscovite period is a particularly fruitful time to consider representations of both bodily difference and parental identity, as it is a time when their articulation in Muscovite culture is under reformulation.

## 1. Literature review

This project advances existing scholarship on gender, sexuality and women’s history in Muscovy. In the last thirty years several key figures have led the way in this field. In 1990, Eve Levin produced the seminal work *Sex and Society in the World of the Orthodox*

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<sup>5</sup> Paul Bushkovitch, *Religion and Society in Russia: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 128.

*Slavs*.<sup>6</sup> This wide-ranging study probes the relationship between prescriptive teaching on sexuality in canon law and sexual practice across the Slavonic world between 900 and 1700. Levin identifies a system of sexual morality that is flexible and contingent on the socio-cultural context, focussed on ensuring social stability locally, rather than militantly and uniformly enforcing a single standard sexual norm across *Slavia Orthodoxa*. In 1999, Nancy Shields Kollman produced a comprehensive comparative study of the Muscovite culture of honour and shame.<sup>7</sup> Through her study of legal documents Kollmann reveals a dynamic and interactive system of social codes of honour in operation across all levels of Muscovite society which define, regulate, mediate and enforce gender relations. Both Levin and Kollmann emphasise that Orthodox rules of sexual conduct, on the one hand, and the gendered social system of honour and shame, on the other, had the predominant function of maintaining social order.

Numerous works have gone on to examine the effect this system of social hierarchy has on gender. The largest body of literature in the field constitutes women's history, in other words, it explores the implications, legal, political and social, of being a woman in the pre-modern East Slavonic world, with a particular focus on the questions of female repression and agency. Historians Ann M. Kleimola and N. L. Pushkareva have considered the legal status of women in Rus and Muscovy through examining legal codes detailing inheritance and property rights.<sup>8</sup> Marie A. Thomas has written a socio-economic study of Muscovite convents in the seventeenth century and explored the question of nuns' agency within these spaces.<sup>9</sup> Nancy Kollmann has explored the political status of women in Muscovy. Her 1983 article on the seclusion of elite women in seventeenth-century Muscovy argued that rather than dismissing seclusion simply as a barbaric misogynistic practice, the nuances of this custom should be explored as it could point to a key role women played in the functioning of a political system that emphasised kin and marriage alliances.<sup>10</sup> Isolde Thyr  t extended Kollmann's work in a productive way in her

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<sup>6</sup> Eve Levin, *Sex and Society in the World of the Orthodox Slavs, 900-1700* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1989).

<sup>7</sup> Nancy Shields Kollmann, *By Honor Bound: State and Society in Early Modern Russia* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1999).

<sup>8</sup> A. M. Kleimola, 'In Accordance with the Canons of the Holy Apostles': Muscovite Dowries and Women's Property Rights', *Russian Review*, 51.2 (April 1992), 204-29; N. L. Pushkareva, *Zhenshchiny drevnei Rusi*, (Moscow: Mysl', 1989).

<sup>9</sup> M. A. Thomas, 'Muscovite Convents in the Seventeenth Century', *Russian History* (hereafter *RH*), 10.2 (1983), 230-242.

<sup>10</sup> Nancy Shields Kollmann, 'The Seclusion of Elite Muscovite Women', *RH*, 10.2 (1983), 170-187.



2001 monograph *Between God and Tsar: Religious symbolism and the Royal Women of Muscovite Russia* that covers the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries.<sup>11</sup> Thyrêt is one of only a few scholars who has focused on the role of cultural production in the construction of gender, considering how Muscovite royal women built an ideological basis to secure their position in the socio-political imagination through their creation and commission of holy images, objects and narratives. She identifies an arsenal of “symbolic vocabulary”, decorating the Tsaritsa’s chambers in the Kremlin, encountered in chronicle accounts and sewn onto Eucharist cloths and tapestries, which endows the royal wife with spiritual authority, thus securing her position as integral to the functioning of the political order.

Eve Levin, N. L. Pushkareva, Isolde Thyrêt and Valerie Kivelson have also produced valuable studies of gender at the intersection of religion and popular culture. These scholars have uncovered alternative discourses of expression for the everyday experiences of men and women and have used them to make conclusions about gendered experiences in Muscovite social life (from what clothes women wore to how they gave birth and how men and women participated in religious culture).<sup>12</sup> Valerie Kivelson’s work is based on extensive analysis of archival material from seventeenth-century witchcraft trials.<sup>13</sup> She convincingly destabilises traditional gendered ideas about witchcraft based on Western European models, demonstrating that in Muscovy men were accused of sorcery at a much higher rate than women, making up around 75 % of the overall accused. Her investigation into the function of magic in Muscovite society reveals a complex and nuanced picture, in which witchcraft predominantly constituted a means of negotiating social tensions in a rigidly hierarchical state system committed to constraining the movement of its subjects. Highlighting the connection between magic

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<sup>11</sup> Isolde Thyrêt, *Between God and Tsar: Religious Symbolism and the Royal Women of Muscovite Russia*, (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001).

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Eve Levin, ‘Childbirth in Pre-Petrine Russia: Canon Law and Popular Traditions’, in *Russia’s Women: Accommodation, Resistance, Transformation*, ed. by Barbara Evans Clements, Barbara Alpern Engel and Christine D. Worobec (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 44-59; N. L. Pushkareva, *Zhenshchiny drevnei Rusi* (1989); *Chastnaia zhizn’ russkoi zhenshchiny. Nevesta, zhena, liubovnitsa (X-nachalo XIX v.)* (Moscow: Lodomir, 1997); ‘Mat’ i materinstvo na Rusi X-XVII vv.’, in *Chelovek v krugu sem’i. Ocherki po istorii chastnoi zhizni v Evrope do nachala novogo vremeni*, ed. by Iu. L. Bessmertnyi (Moscow: RGGU, 1996).

<sup>13</sup> Valerie Kivelson, *Desperate Magic, The Moral Economy of Witchcraft in Seventeenth-Century Russia*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2013). See also Kivelson, ‘Male Witches and Gendered Categories in Seventeenth-Century Russia’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 45.3 (July 2003), 606-631, and ‘Through the Prism of Witchcraft: Gender and Social Change in Seventeenth-Century Muscovy’, in *Russia’s Women*, ed. by Evans Clements, Alpern Engel, and Worobec, pp.74-94.

and social status, Kivelson observes alternate gendered patterns emerging from Muscovite witchcraft trials which differentiated men and women less by inherently gendered assumptions about sorcery than by the social contexts in which they found themselves. Men were more commonly accused of being witches because they more commonly occupied the ranks of people associated with witchcraft, such as itinerants, vagrants or healers (who openly subverted a social order which sought to fix the population in rank and place). Women, when they were accused, were more likely to employ witchcraft as a way to mitigate or negotiate power within the domestic sphere (such as against cruel masters or husbands). However, the type of magic performed didn't clearly diverge along gendered lines.<sup>14</sup> Isolde Thyrêt' observes somewhat similar trends in her article 'Muscovite Miracle Stories as Sources for Gender-Specific Religious Experience', which explores how women's religious experience differed from men's in the shaping of local saints' cults. She observes that instances of miraculous healing for women as recorded in miracle lists tended to occur in different locations and circumstances from those of men and posits that this is due to restrictions upon women's access to monasteries and other holy sites controlled by men. Thyrêt states that women's gender-specific experience of healing cults was born from their lack of ecclesiastical authority and marginalisation from church institutions, controlled by men, causing them to experience the holy in more 'private' or non-institutional settings.<sup>15</sup>

All these studies in varying ways concentrate on uncovering possible modes of female agency, participation and expression within the patriarchal structural framework of Muscovite society. Up until recently, however, there has been little scholarship that focusses not on the study of gender as the study of men and women and their interactions with one another but of how femininity and masculinity as ideologies are culturally constructed in relation to one another.<sup>16</sup> Although it is widely recognised that within

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<sup>14</sup> Valerie Kivelson, 'Male Witches and Gendered Categories', 606-631.

<sup>15</sup> Isolde Thyrêt, 'Muscovite Miracle Stories as Sources for Gender-Specific Religious Experience' in *Religion and Culture in Early Modern Russia and Ukraine*, ed. by S. H. Baron and N. S. Kollmann (DeKalb: Northern Illinois Press, 1997), pp. 115-131.

<sup>16</sup> Notable exceptions to this are the following articles: Nancy Shields Kollmann, '“What's Love Got to Do With It?”: Changing Models of Masculinity in Muscovite and Petrine Russia,' in *Russian Masculinities in History and Culture*, ed. by B. Evans Clements, R. Friedman and D. Healey, (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave, 2002, pp. 15-32, Valerie Kivelson, 'Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Russian Orthodoxy: Sin and Virtue in Cultural Context', in *Letters from Heaven: Popular Religion in Russia and Ukraine*, ed. by John Paul Himka and Andriy Zayarnyuk, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), pp. 100-125; T. R. Rudi, 'Topika russkikh zhitii (voprosy tipologii)', in *Russkaia*

Muscovite society there are men and women of different socio-economic groups, geographical areas, religion, marital status and so on, this awareness of the intersectional nature of social identity has not yet produced many studies which recognise and explore the concomitant contingency and resultant plurality of masculine and feminine identities. In the small body of preliminary work that does exist, difficulties have been encountered when trying to pin down moral standards and define some conception of gender 'normalcy' against which other representations of gender can be defined or measured. One of the main pitfalls arises from the assumption that conceptions of morality in Slavonic Orthodox culture remain more or less static over the Rus and Muscovite periods (1000-1800) because they are underpinned by Orthodox theology, which is in essence monolithic and unchanging in its emphasis on tradition, continuity and invariability. From this, it follows that there can be fixed 'types' of religious models within the Orthodox canon, including static 'Orthodox gender norms' that form the foundation of Rus and Muscovite gender practices.

Recently, Nick Mayhew has been doing original work in this area, employing semiotics and queer theory to deconstruct the historical relationship between Orthodox theology and gender.<sup>17</sup> Mayhew convincingly destabilises hegemonic notions of gender and sexuality in Muscovite culture by challenging the view that official Orthodox liturgical culture is monolithic and unchanging. Through an examination of liturgical and hagiographic representations of marriage and brotherhood, he challenges the assumption that monastic and marital partnerships were always conceptually opposed. In this way, Mayhew demonstrates that the modern binaries of heterosexuality and homosexuality do not hold true for Muscovite sources. This thesis takes a similarly post-structuralist approach to the Muscovite body. It responds to recent work in gender studies, genetics, and the history of the body that problematises essentialist ideas about biological sex by highlighting their socio-historical variation.

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*agiografiia. Issledovaniia, publikatsii. polemika.*, ed. by T. R. Rudi and S. A. Semiachko, (Saint Petersburg: 'Dmitrii Bulanin', 2005), pp. 59-101.

<sup>17</sup> Nick Mayhew, "Banning Spiritual Brotherhoods and Establishing Marital Chastity in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Muscovy and Ruthenia", *Palaeoslavica*, 25:2 (September 2017), 80-108 and "Queering Sodomy: A Challenge to "Traditional" Sexual Relations in Russia", in *Queer-Feminist Solidarity and the East/West Divide*, ed. by Katharina Wiedlack, Saltanat Shoshanova & Masha Godovannaya (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2020), 77-96. See also *Marriage and Brotherhood in Muscovite Russia* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 2018).

In the mid-twentieth century, feminist theorists began to articulate what has come to be known as the sex-gender distinction—that is that biological ‘sex’ (male or female) is separate from ‘gender’, which denotes men and women based on social factors (social role, behaviour, and so on). This is coined perhaps most famously in the words of Simone de Beauvoir, who, in her 1949 book *The Second Sex* wrote that ‘one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman’. In this statement, de Beauvoir rejects biological determinism, arguing that any behavioural and psychological differences between men and women have a social, rather than a biological cause.

In the latter part of the twentieth century, gender theorists such as Judith Butler and Anne Fausto-Sterling have muddled the sex-gender divide somewhat by challenging the idea that ‘natural’ biological sex exists.<sup>18</sup> Fausto-Sterling suggests that biology, too, is to a large degree shaped by social conditioning. Firstly, social factors can shape our bodies directly. For example, bone density is shaped by physical activity, which is segregated by gender, class and race in different configurations across different geographical and historical contexts.<sup>19</sup> Secondly, social factors shape the production of biological knowledge itself. Take, for example, the recent discussions by the International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF) about how to categorise athletes’ bodies as ‘female’ which have drawn attention to the inherent impossibility of deciding what sex is based on biological factors alone.<sup>20</sup>

That sex is a social construct has been demonstrated clearly by historians looking to biological ideas in the past. Historian of the body Thomas Laqueur has famously pointed to the correlation between shifts in the history of thought and shifts in ideas about the body, positing that ideas about female and male anatomy as being fundamentally

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<sup>18</sup> Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: on the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (London: Routledge, 1993); Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), *Sex/Gender: Biology in a Social World*. (New York: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>19</sup> Anne Fausto-Sterling, ‘The Bare Bones of Sex: Part 1- Sex and Gender’, *Signs*, 30.2 (Winter 2005), 1491-1527.

<sup>20</sup> In May 2019, the IAAF introduced a new ‘differences of sexual development’ rule permitting the restriction of testosterone in female runners. This means that female athletes with certain androgen sensitivity and natural testosterone levels of 5 nmol/L and above have to take medication in order to compete. The IAAF’s decision has sparked controversy and is currently being challenged by several athletes including the 800m champion Caster Semenya. The debates centre on the issue of which biological markers define an individual’s sex. The reality is that there are several layers of factors which contribute to biological sex, including chromosomes, hormones, internal reproductive organs and genitalia, topped off with a good dose of social conditioning. These factors do not always align in a neat binary formation, revealing a biological complexity and variation that does not align with the persistent social conception of two sexes: male and female.

different only really appeared in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, at the dawn of modernity. Before that, Laqueur contends, men and women were largely thought to be two versions of the same basic anatomical substratum, made male or female by the level of heat the foetus was exposed to in the womb.<sup>21</sup> Following Laqueur's lead, numerous cultural and literary histories of the sexed body have been produced in the Western European historiographic tradition in the last thirty years.<sup>22</sup> In the early modern context, studies have repeatedly emphasised that the genitalia did not play an important role in constructions of bodily difference and gender ideologies. Patricia Simon in her study of early modern Italy, France, England, Germany and the Netherlands has argued that the endurance of a medical system that conceived of the body according to the flow of humours meant that early modern society placed less importance on the penis and the man's penetrative capacity and more on the semen in the construction of masculinities.<sup>23</sup> Other studies have similarly focussed on the importance of the bodily fluids blood, semen and milk in the construction of sex and gender, and relatedly on the cultural significance of bodily practices such as masturbation.<sup>24</sup> Yet others, as I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter I of this thesis, have concentrated on secondary sexual markers such as body hair and breasts.<sup>25</sup> These studies reveal the variety of ways in which premodern cultures conceptualised bodily difference, often emphasising uncertainty, ambiguity and fluidity.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

<sup>22</sup> For a broad cultural history of the genitalia, for example, see Emma L. E. Rees, *The vagina: a literary and cultural history*, (New York : Bloomsbury Academic, 2013) and David Friedman, *A mind of its own: a cultural history of the penis* (New York: The Free Press, 2001). For a literary perspective, see David A. Hillman and Ulrika Maude, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to the Body in Literature*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

<sup>23</sup> Patricia Simons, *The Sex of Men in Premodern Europe: a cultural history* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>24</sup> On blood and milk in literature see F. E. Sinclair, *Milk & Blood: Gender and Genealogy in the 'Chanson de Geste'*, (Peter Lang: Bern, 2003); Peggy McCracken, *The curse of Eve, the wound of the hero: blood, gender and medieval literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003); Rebecca Zorach, *Blood, milk, ink, gold: abundance and excess in the French Renaissance* (University of Chicago Press, 2005); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: theology and practice in late medieval northern Germany and beyond* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006). On masturbation see Thomas Laqueur, *Solitary Sex: a cultural history of masturbation* (New York: Zone, 2003).

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Marilyn Yalom, *A History of the Breast*, (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1997); Will Fisher, 'The Renaissance Beard: Masculinity in Early Modern England', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 54.1 (Spring 2001), 155-187.

<sup>26</sup> See Cathy McClive, 'Masculinity on trial: penises, hermaphrodites and the uncertain male body in early modern France', *History Workshop Journal*, 68 (2009), 45-68; Boyd Brogan, 'His Belly, Her Seed: Gender and Medicine in Early Modern Demonic Possession', *Representations*, 147.1 (Summer 2019), 1-25.

Yet despite the interest shown to this subject in other cultural contexts, the body has so far received relatively little attention in the history of gender and sexuality in Russian culture. One notable exception to this is the 1993 volume *Sexuality and the Body in Russian Culture* edited by Jane T. Costlow, Stephanie Sandler and Judith Vowles.<sup>27</sup> The twelve essays in this volume show the ways in which ideas about sexuality, gender and the body have shaped and been shaped by Russian literature, history, art and philosophy, placing a special focus on representations of the maternal body and its ambiguous role in conceptions of sexuality in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>28</sup> The volume's contribution to the Kyivan Rus and Muscovite context constitutes a comprehensive cultural history of sexual vocabulary by Eve Levin, but it only briefly touches on the body. Levin records (although does not explicitly comment on) the non-gender specific terminology for genitals common in pre-modern ecclesiastical literature (*estestvo*, *sram*, *udy*), and she also mentions that ecclesiastical artists conveyed sexuality by attributing breasts regardless of the gender of the figure depicted.<sup>29</sup> This thesis picks up and develops these observations, exploring and contextualising the instability and variability of Muscovite representations of bodily difference, with the aim of historicising ideologies of motherhood and fatherhood.

## 2. Approach to the Muscovite body

In this thesis, following the theories laid out in the previous section, 'sex' is understood not as a fixed biological identity (m/f), but as *the relationship between body and gender identity*. It is this relationship, which is negotiated in the social and cultural realm, that all three chapters explore in different genres of Muscovite text. I use the term 'gender' to refer to the social identities of masculinity and femininity, as is standardly accepted usage,

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<sup>27</sup> Jane T. Costlow, Stephanie Sandler & Judith Vowles, eds., *Sexuality and the Body in Russian Culture*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993).

<sup>28</sup> See Costlow, Sandler and Vowles, eds., *Sexuality and the Body*: Jane T. Costlow, 'The Pastoral Source: Representations of the Maternal Breast in Nineteenth-Century Russia', pp. 223-236; Barbara Heldt, 'Motherhood in a Cold Climate: The Poetry and Career of Maria Shkapskaya', pp. 237-254; Eric Naiman, 'Histerectomies: On the Metaphysics of Reproduction in a Utopian Age', pp. 254-276.

<sup>29</sup> Eve Levin, Sexual Vocabulary in Medieval Russia, in *Sexuality and the Body*, ed. by Costlow, Sandler and Vowles, p. 49. Valerie Kivelson similarly observes the lack of differentiation between male and female bodies in Muscovite iconography in her article 'Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Russian Orthodoxy: Sin and Virtue in Cultural Context', in *Letters from Heaven*, ed. by Himka and Zayarnyuk, pp. 100-125.

but I also refer to the ‘gendering of the body’ instead of the ‘sexing of the body’. This is in order to emphasise the social nature of this process as it occurs on the level of text. For the purposes of this thesis, Costlow, Sandler and Vowles’ definition of the body is appropriate. They see the body not as a ‘biologically precise event or object in the physical world, but (following Foucault) rather [a] discursively constituted and changing entity that people have imagined and lived with in various ways throughout Russian history’.<sup>30</sup> I consider Muscovite representations of the body not as conveying historical truths about bodily experience, but as textual constructs which express ideological and aesthetic concerns.

At this point I think it might be useful to provide a few disclaimers. When I speak of ambiguity, fluidity and instability in Muscovite representations of bodily difference I do not mean to suggest that the Muscovites were not aware that male and female bodies were different. Rather, I am interested in whether and how they articulate that difference, whether the physical manifestation of difference is stable over time or across generic boundaries, and what the significance of this is. I do not aim to provide any sort of comprehensive account of what Muscovite people thought about sex difference or how they experienced their bodies. This is because the relationship between the text and Muscovite ‘reality’ cannot ever be reliably reconstructed, since it is always mediated by a range of factors, both textual and ideological. Rather, I explore embodiment in these texts as a means of mapping the impact of cultural, aesthetic and epistemological change on gender norms. In this way, I acknowledge that these texts have a context, and that historical change and aesthetic shifts are interwoven, but do not try and draw direct patterns of influence between them, or to insist that these texts speak to any concrete reality outside of themselves. Lastly, I stress that the scope of this thesis is by no means exhaustive; it focusses on specific modes of representing the body in select examples of sixteenth and seventeenth-century Muscovite written culture.

### 3. Scope of the thesis and use of sources

The project covers the chronological period from the 1550s to 1700, which was marked by the centralisation of political power under a single autocratic leader (first Ivan IV, and

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<sup>30</sup> Costlow, Sandler and Vowles, eds., *Sexuality and the Body*, p. 1.

then later the Romanov Tsars Mikhail Fedorovich, Aleksei Mikhailovich and Petr I). Concomitantly, Muscovite literature of this period was characterised by a preoccupation with the construction of ideologies of collective identity, and of key importance to these was the symbolic construction of the family. This project considers the crystallisation of parental roles in elite culture over this period from the perspective of medicine and anatomy, religion, dynastic culture and domestic life. It presents a diverse range of sources, both in terms of chronology and genre, but what unites these sources is their attention to the body, reproduction and family. The aim of the thesis is not to produce a comprehensive study of the body or of parenthood in Muscovite literature but to use case studies to track particular trajectories in the development of parental ideologies across literary genres and chronological boundaries, and in particular to consider the theoretical construction of sex and the body within these ideologies of parenthood.

#### 4. Contents of the thesis

The first chapter of this thesis destabilises modern assumptions about biological difference that rest on the concept of a fixed anatomical binary. Using Thomas Laqueur's theories about the premodern body, it argues that in Muscovy the function and significance of anatomy in definitions of gender was not fixed but subject to fluctuation as social customs changed. It takes an historical approach, first surveying a selection of late Muscovite medical texts that present reproductive and anatomical knowledge, and then exploring the relationship between this proliferating scientific literature and contemporary ecclesiastical polemics on the body. I analyse descriptions of reproductive anatomy in the medical sources, arguing that there was no stable or consistent set of distinctions drawn between male and female genitalia or reproductive organs. Anatomy was not understood to be separate from, but, rather, in constant interaction with the social, moral, mental and emotional parts of the self. Ideas about bodily difference crystallised in the intersection of the body with social norms and were articulated through the regulation of bodily practices. Growing a beard and breastfeeding were pivotal signifiers of gender in seventeenth-century Muscovite texts. Although they proceed from biological differences, these practices differentiated between men and women not primarily on the basis of inherent or universal physical attributes, since not every member of the male sex



can grow a beard (children and adolescents, for instance) and not all women breastfeed. Rather, they make distinctions according to contemporary socio-moral principles; these practices supported existing gender roles within the Muscovite institution of the family. The final part of the chapter identifies a shift in the ontological status of the body in Muscovite ecclesiastical polemics towards the close of the seventeenth century. This new treatment of the body reflected debates ongoing in natural philosophy across Europe, in the wake of new scientific discoveries, that were retreating from a holistic view of body, emotion and morality towards a conception of the body as a living machine, subservient to the rational soul. This shift, I argue, paved the way for more fixed conceptions of bodily difference in Muscovy in the eighteenth century.

The first chapter provides a historical and theoretical context for chapters two and three, which trace trajectories of the reproductive body in select texts. Acknowledging the absence of a fixed anatomical binary in scientific discourse, these two chapters foreground the role of ideological factors, textual factors and literary form in shaping the cultural expression of bodily difference and determining its meaning in ideologies of parenthood. Both chapters analyse literary representations of the Muscovite family spanning the mid-sixteenth to late-seventeenth centuries focussing on the following questions: firstly, to what degree are motherhood and fatherhood associated with the body and its reproductive capacity, and to what degree are they associated with certain characteristics, behaviours, actions; secondly, how are physical and behavioural traits correlated; and thirdly, how does the construction of maternity interact with expressions of paternal identity, and with patriarchal structures more broadly?

Specifically, Chapter Two explores body and parenthood in the sixteenth-century *Stepennaia kniga* (1550s), the first genealogy of the Muscovite royal family which was produced under Ivan IV. This chronicle-history envisions parenthood through the lens of rulership and patrimony, as symbolised in its depiction of the reproductive body. Despite the fact that the *Stepennaia kniga* contains one of the largest concentrations of hagiographic narratives about mothers of the period, procreative processes such as childbirth or breastfeeding do not feature directly in the sanctification of the royal mother figures. The representation of both parental bodies and parental behaviour is dictated by concerns about dynastic lineage passing from father to son. Procreative capacity is accentuated in the case of male rulers whereas the mother's body is associated with

abstinence and her fertility, alongside her affective relationship with her child is downplayed. Biological processes such as conception and childbirth are framed as miracles effected by holy men of the Muscovite Orthodox Church.

Whereas Chapter Two highlights the absence of a clearly defined maternal identity for the royal women of the dynasty, Chapter Three explores the emergence of a distinct discourse on motherhood as separate from fatherhood in seventeenth-century poetry celebrating the family. In the 1600s, Muscovite literary culture underwent major aesthetic and formal shifts under the influence of the Belarusian, Ukrainian and Polish Baroque. This was connected predominantly with the development of the poetic mode, which brought a new focus on emotionality and, alongside this, transformed the symbolic potential of the human body. Using Monique Scheer's theory of emotion as embodied practice, I consider a selection of poems across the century which reimagine the role of the female body in reproduction through a discourse of maternal suffering. The suffering mother gains literary and cultural currency first through metaphor, in the *Poslanie k materem* (*Letter to mothers*, 1640s), and then as an allegorical emblem in Simeon of Polatsk's 1669 poem *Freny ili Plachi vsekh sanov i chinov pravoslavnorossiiskogo tsarstva o smerti Blagovernia i Khristoliubivya Gosudaryni Tsaritsy i Velikiia Kniagini Marii Ilichny* (*Freny or lamentations of all the orders and levels of the Orthodox Russian kingdom on the death of the blessed and Christ-loving Lady Tsaritsa and Grand Princess Mariia Ilichna*). In the earlier poem, maternal pain is framed as the preeminent symbol of parental love. Maternal body parts and biological processes such as childbirth and feeding are imbued with emotional and moral significance as metaphors of parental sacrifice, compassion and protection. In Simeon's *Freny*, the suffering mother gains significance as a literary trope beyond the context of family values, coming to personify unconditional Christian love.

This thesis demonstrates that alongside religious tradition and developments in scientific knowledge, literature plays an equally important role in gendering the Muscovite body. Alongside the disciplines of medicine and anatomy Baroque poetry, too, engages critically with the human body using figurative language. Through the exploitation of the maternal body as metaphor and emblem and the propagation of a gendered discourse of love—as maternal suffering—reproductive and anatomical difference is endowed with symbolic, moral and cultural capital.

## CHAPTER I: (DE)CONSTRUCTING SEX IN MUSCOVY

### 1. Introduction

In one of the oldest and most frequently cited dictionaries of Old East Slavonic, the compiler I. I. Sreznevskii provides several meanings of the word *chresla*. He lists *poiasnitsa, stan*—roughly translating as loins, lower back or waist—as the primary meaning. He gives *bedra* (hips) as the secondary meaning. Then he lists two more meanings, *utroba zhenskaia* ('female utroba', by which he means womb), and a more metaphorical translation, *rod, sem'ia, pokolenie* (line, family, generation). For these last two he provides almost the same example:

1. Утроба женская: - Моли, не престаючи, чистая, прошьдъшаго и-щресль твоихъ. 2. Род, семья, поколение: - Ис корене Иосеова, и-щресль Давида, отроковице Мария, днь родися.<sup>31</sup>

1. Female utroba (womb): - Pray unceasingly, most Pure one, to the issue of your chresla. 2. Line, family, generation: -From the root of Joseph and of the chresla of David, a child was born to Mary this day<sup>32</sup>

The only discernible difference between these two examples is that in the first, the word *chresla* is being applied to a woman and in the second, to a man. However, Sreznevskii decides that in the case of the woman it must be referring to reproductive anatomy and in the case of the man it has only a metaphorical function, referring not his body but to his lineage in a more abstract sense. In the citations he gives there is nothing to suggest this interpretation. In both examples *chresla* could have an anatomical meaning and a transferred meaning of 'line, lineage'.

The reason I open with Sreznevskii's definitions of *chresla* is that I have found it is a good example demonstrating to what extent modern anatomical thinking about the

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<sup>31</sup> I. I. Sreznevskii, *Materialy dlia slovaria drevne-russkogo iazyka po pis'mennym" pamiatnikom"*, vol. 6 (Saint Petersburg: Imperatorskaia Akademiia Nauk, 1893), p. 1541.

<sup>32</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all translations (and therefore all mistakes) are my own.

body can affect our reading of pre-modern texts. Sreznevskii assumes a sexual and reproductive difference between the male and female bodies that is not present in the original formulations. Ideas about the natural world are always inescapably bound up with social norms, meaning that how people see the human body reflects the political-moral concerns of their own time and culture. Clearly, Muscovite knowledge about anatomy and reproduction was very different from the knowledge we have today. Correspondingly, Muscovite texts represent anatomy and reproductive function in ways that seem unfamiliar and strange to us. Why should we assume, therefore, that the role of the body in Muscovite definitions of gender has remained unchanged?

In Muscovite studies, interest in the body is growing and scholars are drawing attention to the need to abandon modern assumptions about physicality. In a recent paper, Valerie Kivelson explores the representation of the body in Muscovite spells, where she suggests that the Muscovite 'self' was not neatly contained; boundaries between 'inside and 'outside' were blurred and 'bodies and body parts, emotions, conditions, and behaviors ...were fungible, transportable, exchangeable'.<sup>33</sup> No one yet, however, has extended this to thinking about sexual anatomy. In the first major study of sex in the pre-modern Slavic world, historian Eve Levin notes that Orthodox rules of sexual conduct supported social hierarchies, reinforcing 'the authority of families over individuals, masters over servants, men over women, and the clergy over their parishioners'.<sup>34</sup> This chapter posits that it is this gender hierarchy, entrenched in canon law and in Muscovite social life, that governed not only the behaviour of men and women but also conceptions of what men and women actually *were*. In so doing, it introduces a framework for thinking about sex and the body in pre-modern Russia that informs the analysis of literature in chapters two and three. In this chapter, I show that anatomy was not particularly important to Muscovite constructions of gender difference. While the gender hierarchy remained constant, representations of bodies did not adhere to a stable anatomical binary. It was bodily practices that informed ideas of bodily difference. As such, the role of the body in notions

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<sup>33</sup> Valerie Kivelson, 'Distributed Personhood and Extruded Selves: Boundaries and Body Parts in Muscovite Magical Spells', unpublished paper delivered at the Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies conference (Boston, 6-9 December 2018), p. 27. Thanks go to Valerie Kivelson for providing me with a copy of her paper for citation purposes.

<sup>34</sup> Levin, *Sex and Society*, p. 297.

of gender difference was unstable, liable to change and flux in response to contemporary political-moral debates about Muscovite identity.

### 1.1 Theorising sex difference in pre-modern Europe

Historian of the body Thomas Laqueur began the discussion of sex as something historically contingent in his 1990 book *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, in which he points to the correlation between shifts in the history of thought and shifts in the conceptualisation of sex. Laqueur's main contribution, and the one I find most productively applicable to pre-modern Russia, is the inversion of the modern conception of the distinction between sex and gender, the former generally considered to be 'natural' or 'true' and the latter socially constructed. He suggests that 'sex before the seventeenth century was...a sociological, not an ontological category'.<sup>35</sup> What he means by this is that gender—man and woman as social categories—was the ordering principle, the 'real' category. The 'truth' about the nature of men and women was to be found not in the body, but heavenly powers. The fact that women were by nature weak and men strong was not something found to be true through empirical observation, but something known to be true independent of physical reality. The body and its organs were symbolic of a greater world order, ordained by God, and so sex was simply the bodily manifestation of truths about men and women. As such, it was in theory open to a certain degree of change and flux.

Laqueur labels the pre-modern framework for understanding the body as 'one-sex', in which men and women were largely thought to be two versions of the same basic anatomical substratum. He suggests that the rise of empirical and rational thought in the Enlightenment caused the primary site of knowledge and 'truth' about gender difference to shift gradually away from religious or classical principles to the flesh of the body itself. In this 'two-sex' model, female and male anatomy are seen as fundamentally and irreconcilably different. This model would reach its zenith in the nineteenth century with the idea that men and women have not only different reproductive organs but also different brains.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Laqueur, *Making Sex*, p. 8.

<sup>36</sup> Among those who used craniology to argue for the intellectual inferiority of women were Paul Broca (1824-1880 and Gustave Le Bon (1841-1931), who wrote that a large number of women have 'brains

Laqueur points to the crucial role that humoral theory played in dictating how pre-modern bodies were understood. According to Classical medicine, the human body was governed by the circulation and exchange of the four ‘humors’ or vital bodily fluids; blood, yellow bile, black bile and phlegm.<sup>37</sup> Other bodily fluids such as seed and milk, that in modern understandings are proof of the incommensurability of the two sexes, were considered to be distilled forms of blood, produced in the digestion of food. As such, they were part of the same general economy of bodily fluids, understood not according to a binary of gender but according to the degree of heat to which they were exposed in the body. Moreover, according to the Hippocratic line of early modern medical thought both men and women ejaculated seed at the moment of conception; the woman from the womb and the man from the testicles. As Laqueur notes, ‘the borders between blood, semen, other residues and food, between the reproductive organs and other organs, were indistinct...and porous’.<sup>38</sup>

Laqueur’s observations for the pre-sixteenth-century world are drawn almost exclusively from classical sources, and he doesn’t in any detail consider how these ideas develop in the vernacular European Christian cultures that inherited Hippocratic and Aristotelian medical thought. However, his work has opened up the discussion of sex—to reiterate, being the relationship between body and gender—as something contextual. Although not all historians of medieval and early modern Europe over the last thirty years have subscribed to his ‘one-sex’ model, many have shown that anatomical distinctions between male and female bodies were not as clear-cut in the pre-modern period as they are today, and that sexual difference manifests in a number of culturally-specific ways. Both Joan Cadden and Helen King, for example, have suggested that it might be productive to conceptualise sexual difference in medieval Europe as being primarily located elsewhere in the body, such as in body hair.<sup>39</sup> In the context of early modern England, Will Fisher has argued along similar lines for the primacy of the beard as a

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closer in size to those of gorillas than to the most developed male brains’ (Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1981), pp. 104-105.) Charles Darwin’s theories of evolution also perpetuated the idea of inherent male and female difference and, along with it, female inferiority, see Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1896), pp. 562-4.

<sup>37</sup> See Vivian Nutton, ‘Humoralism’, in W. F. Bynum and Roy Porter, eds., *Companion Encyclopedia of the History of Medicine*, vol. I (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 281 - 291.

<sup>38</sup> Laqueur, *Making Sex*, p. 42.

<sup>39</sup> Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference* (1993); Helen King, *The One-Sex Body on Trial: The Classical and Early Modern Evidence* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2013).

signifier of the male sex, while Boyd Brogan reconsiders the gendering of the Renaissance body from the perspectives of exorcism and medicine.<sup>40</sup> In his recent article, Brogan considers the case of the so-called womb-disease ‘suffocation of the mother’ (which has often been classed as a conceptual predecessor to hysteria, the nineteenth-century gynaecological condition) being attributed to a man. Brogan posits that ‘suffocation of the womb’ was considered to be part of a wider category of convulsive illnesses, such as epilepsy, that were associated with demonic possession in this period and that affected both men and women. In this way, he emphasises the similarities rather than the differences between male and female bodies in theories of early modern sexual physiology.

This chapter takes Laqueur’s claim that ‘sex before the seventeenth century was...a sociological, not an ontological category’ and considers it in the ideological context of sixteenth and seventeenth-century Muscovy, a period of great socio-historical and scientific change and upheaval. It applies a similar approach to Brogan, considering the construction of sexual difference with reference to both medical and religious discussions of the body and identity in this period, and culminates with a consideration of the emergence of a new paradigm for conceiving the body at the dawn of the Petrine reforms.

## 1.2 History of anatomy in early modern Europe and in Muscovy

The emergence of modern human anatomy as a discipline is associated with the figure of Andreas Vesalius, the 16<sup>th</sup>-century Flemish physician, who published two seminal texts, *Tabulae sex* (*Six Plates*, 1538) and *De humani corporis fabrica* (*The Fabric of the Human Body*, 1543). His work signalled a revolution in thinking about the human body, mainly due to his commitment to dissecting real human bodies, a practice that not been particularly widespread in Europe up until this point. During the Medieval period, Galen’s theories about the body (c.130- c.210) based on the dissection of animal bodies had directed thinking on human anatomy. Vesalius was convinced of the importance of first-

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<sup>40</sup> Fisher, ‘The Renaissance Beard’, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 155-187; Brogan, ‘His Belly, Her Seed’ *Representations*, 1-25.

hand, visual evidence, and his works are among the first in any discipline to be based so closely on empirical observation.<sup>41</sup>

The trend towards observation-based natural philosophy grew in the seventeenth century. The new science increasingly conceptualised the material world as a mechanical system governed by physical laws and sought to uncover how these laws operated (represented probably most famously by Isaac Newton's *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica* (*Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, 1687). This thinking extended to human and animal bodies. In 1637, René Descartes published his *Discours de la Méthode* (*Discourse on Method*) in which he proposed the existence of a singular, rational soul—constituted by human consciousness—and relegated all of God's material creation, including the human body, to the realm of 'mere extension' (*res extensa*), that is, inert matter governed by the iron law of mechanics'.<sup>42</sup> This was a revolutionary step, because prior to this in European cultures the lines between body and soul were not nearly so clear cut. According to Neoplatonic and Aristotelian scientific inheritance, the soul was considered variously to be divided into several parts which resided in different parts of the body. In Plato's *Timaeus* and *Phaedrus*, for instance, the soul is divided into three parts: the rational element in the head, the spirit in the breast or heart and the appetites in the belly. Aristotle reconceptualised this into a twofold division of the rational and irrational souls, the former common only to humans and the latter, incorporating so-called 'animal' and 'vegetable' souls, residing in the bodies of humans, animals and plants.<sup>43</sup> These ideas proved extremely influential in Christian culture, which constantly trod a fine line between contempt for and celebration of the flesh as united with and necessary to the immortality of the soul.

Descartes' work definitively divorced body and soul, laying the body bare for study in the empirical terms of the new science. Starting with the publication of William Harvey's seminal *Exercitatio Anatomica de Motu Cordis et Sanguinis in Animalibus* (*Anatomical Account of the Motion of the Heart and Blood in Animals*) in 1628, philosophers began to speak of the human body, too, as a mechanism or made up of elaborate components each with their individual role and function, operating according

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<sup>41</sup> Charles Joseph Singer, *A Short History of Anatomy from the Greeks to Harvey* (New York: Dover Publications, 1957), pp. 119 and 123.

<sup>42</sup> Roy Porter, *Flesh in the Age of Reason*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), p. 7.

<sup>43</sup> Porter, *Flesh in the Age of Reason*, pp. 31-33.



to observable laws. These ideas were explored in a range of works across the century, such as Thomas Willis' *Cerebri Anatome (Anatomy of the Brain, 1664)* and Giovanni Borelli's *De Motu Animalium (On the Motion of Animals, 1680)*.<sup>44</sup> These scientific ideas about the body in general supported existing theological concepts, but the gradual de-sacralisation of the body had begun. Very gradually, over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the focus moved away from Scripture and scholasticism towards the new disciplines of physics, mechanics and chemistry and a new scientific understanding of the human condition.

In Muscovy, in connection with the Petrine reforms at the very end of the seventeenth century, anatomy emerged as a formal discipline on two levels. Control over the body was at the foundation of Peter I's project to remake Muscovite society, as witnessed by his decrees banning beards, stipulating fashionable dress and enforcing new patterns of behaviour. This interest was limited not only to the living body, but also to the bodies of deceased, unborn and deformed subjects. Peter had a well-known fascination with dissection, and after he visited anatomy theatres abroad he introduced the first programme of lectures on anatomy and dissection in 1699, and founded the first Russian museum of natural history, the *Kunstakamera*, in Saint Petersburg in 1714, where numerous anatomical 'curiosities' were put on display.<sup>45</sup> The formal consolidation of anatomical nomenclature and terminology came later, in the middle of the century. In 1757, Martyn Il'ich Shein translated the German anatomist Lorenz Heister's *Compendium anatomicum (Anatomical compendium)*, combining native terms and new designations, for the most part calques from Greek and Latin. Subsequently, specialised anatomical terminology was developed; it was augmented predominantly by Greek and Latin words in a similar fashion to the rest of Europe.<sup>46</sup>

This chapter is concerned with Muscovite anatomical terminology and ideas about the body before this period of formalisation, in the period leading up to and on the cusp

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<sup>44</sup> Porter, 'Medicine and the Body' in *Flesh in the Age of Reason*, pp. 44-61.

<sup>45</sup> Viktoriia Ushinskene (Viktorija Ušinskienė), *Narodnaia anatomicheskaia terminologiiia v russkom iazyke: slovoobrazovatel'naia i semanticheskaia rekonstruktsiia naimenovanii briushnykh organov* (Vilnius: Vilniaus Universitetas Filologijos Fakultetas, 2012), p. 40. Fedor Maksimishin has productively viewed Peter's fascination with dissection in the context of a broader late Muscovite reformation of the body in art, literature and political life in his paper 'Dismemberment as Means of Public Enlightenment. On One Aspect of Karion Istomin's Illustrated Primer', unpublished paper delivered at the Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies conference (Boston, 6-9 December 2018). Thanks go to Fedor Maksimishin for providing me with a copy of his paper for citation purposes.

<sup>46</sup> Ushinskene (Ušinskienė), *Narodnaia anatomicheskaia terminologiiia v russkom iazyke*, p. 42.

of the Petrine reforms. This is a period when medical literature of various kinds was starting to proliferate, but there was an absence of firm disciplinary boundaries and consistent nomenclature. New scientific knowledge was being transmitted into Muscovy but was mainly inserted into an existing theological framework for conceiving the body. This overarching framework began showing signs of remodelling only at the very close of the century.

While the Muscovites had texts which discussed human anatomy in some form or other from the earliest period in their history, such texts were not particularly numerous before the 1500s. The first texts about natural history are generally considered to be the *Shestodnevy*, texts which recounted the creation of the world by God in six days, including a section on the creation of man.<sup>47</sup> The second formative text in the history of anatomical literature in Muscovy is the *Galinovo na Ippokrata*, sometimes known as *Galenova na Gippokrata* (*Galen on Hippocrates*), a summary of Galen's key theories about the human body and soul. The exact history of this text in Muscovite Rus' is not well known but the earliest manuscript witness, from the Kirill-Belozersk monastery, dates to the first quarter of the fifteenth century (where it is believed to have been translated by the eponymous founder of the monastery himself).<sup>48</sup> *Galinovo na Ippokrata* demonstrates two things; firstly, that the classical model of the four humours (blood, phlegm, black and yellow bile) and their corresponding qualities (heat and wet, cold and wet, cold and dry and hot and dry) for conceiving of bodily health, illness, age and temperament was available in Muscovy, and secondly, that the concept of a tri-partite soul was current (whose parts the text labels as '*slovesnoe*', '*iarostnoe*' and '*zhelatelnoe*'). Of course, it should be stated that the extent of the reception of these ideas remains hard to gauge. The same is true of thermal theory, which was the main theoretical framework for conceiving of gender in medieval and early modern Western Europe. Thermal theory was rooted in and closely aligned with humoral theory in classical and Renaissance medicine and held that men were naturally hotter and drier than women, who

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<sup>47</sup> Several versions of the *Shestodnev* circulated in Kyivan Rus and Muscovy, including one attributed to John, exarch of Bulgaria which was known from the thirteenth century in Rus, and another attributed to the Byzantine author George of Pisidia, which was translated into Church Slavonic in the fourteenth century. In the sixteenth century, the latter was included in Metropolitan Makarii's *Velikie chet'i minei*.

<sup>48</sup>RNB, Kir.-Bel. XII, fols. 219r- 222; for a published edition of the text see L. A. Dmitriev and D. S. Likhachev, eds., *Pamiatniki literatury drevnei Rusi. Vtoraia polovina XV veka*, vol. 5 (hereafter *PLDR*) (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1982), pp.192-196.

were by contrast colder and wetter (which was often used to accuse women of a range of corresponding qualities, such as being slower, weaker and more emotionally unstable). Again, it is hard to say how much traction this theory had in Muscovite conceptions of gender, but it was certainly available and known, since it appears explicitly in at least three translated medical sources and is implicitly referenced in works of seventeenth-century Muscovite ecclesiastics (which I discuss later in this chapter). One rare early example comes in the same fifteenth-century manuscript as the *Galinovo na Ippokrata*, in a natural-philosophical text entitled *Aleksandrovo* which describes the conception and development of the foetus in the womb. This text writes that ‘a male child is formed from the heat of the seed, and a female child as a result of the lack of heat [of the seed] and coldness’.<sup>49</sup>

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the medical literary landscape began to change. This was largely due to the emergence of medicine on a State level. In 1581 the first apothecary (*apteka*) was opened in the Moscow Kremlin, served by foreign doctors from abroad. The *apteka* treated only the Muscovite royal family, and those close to the Tsar. In 1620, the Apothecary Chancellery (*Aptekarskii Prikaz*) was founded, which again constituted foreign medical professionals who treated the royal court.<sup>50</sup> Only in 1670 was the Apothecary Chancellery opened to Muscovite subjects more broadly.

The gradual development of the medical establishment in Muscovy over this period found reflection in textual production. The sixteenth century saw a growing tendency towards large encyclopaedic compilations as part of the Muscovite rulers’ state-building project. Exhaustive compilations were assembled on a range of topics from

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<sup>49</sup> “Бывають убо мужьскъ пол топлоты ради семени, женскы же лишения ради и студени”, RNB, Kir.-Bel. XII, fols. 222r- 224; also in Dmitriev and Likhachev, eds., *PLDR*, vol. 5, pp.196-200. Not much is known about the origins of this text, but it is most likely either a translation or synopsis of classical physiological theory, in a similar way as *Galinovo na Ippokrata*. Lur’e suggests that the ‘Alexander’ could refer to Alexander of Aphrodisias, a Greek natural philosopher from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD who wrote commentaries on Aristotle. See Ia. S. Lur’e, ‘Literaturnaia i kul’turno-prosvetitel’skaia deiatel’nost’ Efrosina v kontse XV v.’ in *Trudy Otdela Drevne-russkoi literatury* (hereafter *TODRL*), vol. 17 (Moscow, Leningrad: Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1961), p. 149. This text is interesting from the perspective of Muscovite ideas about conception and the beginning of human life as it states that the seed is already ensouled when it enters the womb, a statement that would appear to contradict the common understanding in the Medieval West that the soul enters the child at the point of first foetal movement (commonly known as ‘quickening’). This topic would greatly benefit from further research. A different redaction of this text appears in seventeenth-medical compilations under another name, as ‘*O zachatii chelovechestem*’” (‘On Conception’) alongside treatises on midwifery (see Table 1, (5)).

<sup>50</sup> See Clare Griffin, ‘The Production and Consumption of Medical Knowledge in Seventeenth-Century Russia: The Apothecary Chancery’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University College London, 2012).

history to hagiography, the most famous being Metropolitan Makarii's *Velikie chet'i minei*, the *Stepennaia kniga* and the *Litsevoi letopisnyi svod*. As T. A. Isachenko has argued, this trend also extended to the field of medicine.<sup>51</sup> Rather than texts on natural history appearing sporadically in manuscripts which included a variety of other texts, they were increasingly collated and incorporated into new genres of medical literature that focussed on the functional as well as the theoretical. In 1534, when Grand Prince Vasiliï III was suffering from an illness, Metropolitan Daniil commissioned a translation of the German herbal the *Gart der Gesundheit* (*Hortus Sanitatis*, or *Garden of health*), originally published by Johann von Cube in 1492. This volume constituted an illustrated list of plants and their healing properties, with an index of illnesses for cross-referencing purposes. Isachenko sees this text, rendered in Russian as the *Blagoprokhladnyi tsvetnik vertograd zdравиia* (*The blessedly refreshing florilegium or garden of health*) and commonly known as the *Travnik Liubchanina* (*The Lübeck Herbal*, after the place of publication of the original text) as an early example of this broader sixteenth-century impulse to gather and formalise knowledge.

From the later part of the sixteenth century and across the seventeenth century other herbals and home remedy books (known as *travniki* and *lechebniki*) were translated from Polish and German originals. As these genres began to proliferate, they took on a life of their own in Muscovite redactions.<sup>52</sup> Another emergent genre of anatomical text that speaks to this encyclopaedic impulse in this period is pseudo-Aristotelian *problemata* literature. Although this type of literature existed in the medieval period, such texts became widespread in Muscovy from the sixteenth and particularly into the seventeenth century under the influence of the Renaissance tradition.<sup>53</sup> *Problemata* collections either reproduced or imitated the writing of Aristotle and his followers (particularly Alexander

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<sup>51</sup> T. A. Isachenko, *Perevodnaia moskovskaia knizhnost'. Mitropolichii i patriarshii skriptorii XV-XVII vv.* (Moscow: Pashkov dom, 2009) pp. 9-10.

<sup>52</sup> The 19<sup>th</sup>-century academic Ia. Chistovich defined the *lechebnik* as a collection structured according to a list of illnesses and their treatment, and the *travnik* as a collection structured by an alphabetical list of healing plants and their properties followed by an index of illnesses for cross-referencing purposes (Ia. Chistovich, 'Starinnye russkiye lechebniki i travniki', *Drug zdравиia*, 16 (1852)). However, the two terms are often used interchangeably and distinctions between the texts themselves are often blurred. A given compilation might contain more than one index, or alternate between lists of healing plants, stones and metals or lists of illnesses.

<sup>53</sup> Ushinskene (Ušinskienė), *Narodnaia anatomicheskaia terminologiia v russkom iazyke*, pp. 37-38, T. V. Chumakova, 'Retseptsii Aristotelia v drevnerusskoi kul'ture', *Chelovek*, 2 (2005), 58-69, M. N. Speranskii, *Iz istorii otrechennykh knig IV. Aristotelevy vrata, ili Tainaia tainykh* (Saint Petersburg: Tipografiia M. A. Aleksandrova 1908).

of Aphrodisias, Plutarch and Cassius), taking the form of a dialogue characterised by causal questions (“why?” and synonyms) and answers about everyday phenomena. This genre of literature tackled all manner of topics including politics, economics and cosmography, but often focussed on natural philosophy, medicine and biology.<sup>54</sup> One Muscovite example is an untitled text I analyse in this chapter, referred to by scholars as *Svedeniia po anatomii, fisiologii i pr.* Other key medieval and Renaissance scientific tracts imported from Western Europe in this period works included *De Secretis Mulierum* (*Women’s Secrets*) by Pseudo-Albertus Magnus, which was translated into Old Russian in 1670, and Andreas Vesalius’ 1543 text *Epitome*, an anatomical textbook was translated into Old Russian in 1658 under the name *Vrachevskaia anatomiiia* (*Anatomy for doctors*). This text can be said to be the first anatomical textbook to be produced in Russia and was used as a teaching tool in the medical school attached to the *Aptekarskii Prikaz*.<sup>55</sup>

### 1.3 Methodology and sources

In this chapter, my focus is on analysing natural-philosophical theories of bodily difference circulating in Muscovy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in light of contemporary ecclesiastical debates about gendered bodily practices involving beard shaving and breastfeeding. It is not a comprehensive study of Muscovite ideas of bodily difference, as such a study is beyond the scope of this thesis. Rather, it focusses on select case studies drawn from medical and ecclesiastical literature which was circulating among a fairly small Muscovite cultural elite. I am not interested in measuring the wider influence of these texts or their reception in Muscovite society in any concrete way, nor

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<sup>54</sup> Ann M. Blair, “The *Problemata* as a Natural Philosophical Genre,” in [Anthony Grafton](#) and Nancy Siraisi, eds., *Natural Particulars: Nature and the Disciplines in Renaissance Europe* (Cambridge, MA, London: The MIT Press, 1999), pp.171-204.

<sup>55</sup> For many years the manuscript was held in the Synod library but has now been lost and no copy survives (it is said to have been destroyed by fire in 1812). The only extant witness to the existence of this text is the following note in the account book of the Patriarchal Finance Office (*Patriarskii kazennyi prikaz*) from 1658: “on the 8<sup>th</sup> May the Kievan hieromonach Epifanii, who lives in the Chudov monastery, translated a doctor’s book into the Slavonic language for Patriarch, and was given 10 rubles. This money was taken to the the hieromonach Epifanii at the Chudov monastery by order of the treasurer by the servant Ivan Zertsalov”. See V. V. Kuprianov and G. O. Tatevosianits, *Otechestvennaia anatomiiia na etapakh istorii*, (Moscow: Meditsina, 1981), pp. 66-68 and N. A. Oboronin, ‘Vydaiushcheesia sobytie v istorii otechestvennoi meditsiny (k 300-letiiu perevoda na russkii iazyk “De humani corporis fabrica” Andreia Vezaliiia)’, *Arkhiv anatomii, gistologii i embriologii*, 36.5 (1959), 100-104.

do I draw direct lines of influence between medical and ecclesiastical literature. These case studies are chosen for what they can say about broad trajectories of Muscovite thought about the body across the period.

I focus on one particular account of the human body as a case study, known as *O chelovechestem" estestve, o vidimem i nevidimem* (*On Human Nature, on the visible and invisible*, hereafter *O chelovechestem" estestve*), and consider its description of anatomy in the context of a selection of other medical tracts and ecclesiastical commentaries on the body produced in Muscovy in the seventeenth century.<sup>56</sup> I have chosen to focus on this text in particular because it is one of few existing theoretical treatises which positions the human body, including detailed descriptions of its internal function, within a broader philosophical-theological framework. This means that while the primary focus of other medical texts tends to be explicitly functional (midwifery manuals, herbals, home remedy books etc), with references to anatomy appearing only in passing, *O chelovechestem" estestve* considers in detail human anatomy and its relationship to identity, morality and emotions. Other than *O chelovechestem" estestve*, there is one more theoretical anatomical treatise that I refer to in this chapter known as *Svedenii po anatomii*, a pseudo-Aristotelian text in the question-and-answer format. I have no concrete information about the provenance of this treatise, but the manuscript witness I use dates from the seventeenth century. The ecclesiastical sources that I use in this chapter—the sermons of Patriarch Adrian, the poetry of Simeon of Polatsk and the writings of Dmitrii Tuptalo (Bishop of Rostov)—again represent a selection of ideas of the key religious figures of the age and are not meant to constitute a comprehensive history.

In the first section I focus on terminology. I survey terms for genitalia and internal reproductive organs in *O chelovechestem" estestve* and compare them to the vocabulary choices in other sixteenth and seventeenth-century Old Russian translated medical treatises (including *lechebniki*, *travniki*, pseudo-aristotelian literature and others). In my quest for penises and wombs I am continuously frustrated. There is no standard lexicon for distinguishing between male and female reproductive parts. I find a repeated lack of specificity, consistency, and sometimes plain confusion when it comes to describing these body parts and a persistent conflation of the reproductive and digestive systems. On the

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<sup>56</sup> GIM. Sin. № 921, fols. 124r- 129. The manuscript dates from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century and belonged to priest Nikifor Simeonov, a copyist at the Moscow Printing Office (*Pechatnyi Dvor*).

strength of this, I make the case for abandoning a binary anatomical framework for conceiving of bodily difference when dealing with Muscovite sources.

In the second section, I argue that biology in Muscovy is understood not as an ontological truth but as the physical manifestation of social principles; as a means of expressing and underpinning them. I advocate thinking about sex in Muscovy therefore not as a physical essence, as something one *is* or the parts that one has, but as a social hierarchy which is upheld by bodily practices. These practices are informed by socio-cultural factors and are liable to change. I examine the descriptions of male and female difference that *O chelovechestem*” *estestve* does present. These include social distinctions such as clothing, and bodily practices that we would consider to a great extent ‘socialised’ such as growing a beard and breastfeeding, which were determined by class, custom, context and other social constraints and were not performed by every man or woman. In this way I draw attention to the instability and socio-cultural specificity of bodily difference.

In the final section, I situate the practices of growing a beard and breastfeeding within a broader historical landscape of socio-cultural, religious and epistemological change. I explore how the same scientific knowledge about these bodily practices is variously interpreted and mobilised by key figures in the Muscovite Orthodox Church in debates about the morality of beard shaving and breastfeeding across the seventeenth century, culminating with the writings of Dmitrii Tuptalo (Bishop of Rostov) in the early eighteenth century. The first point of this is theoretical, to demonstrate that the way gender was seen to manifest in the body and the meaning of this bodily difference was not fixed across the period. Representations of bodily difference in ecclesiastical literature were a means of negotiating shifting ideas about gender, religious and collective identity. The second point of this section is to trace a chronological shift. I show how breastfeeding is consolidated as a gendered symbol in the writings of Dmitrii Tuptalo while the beard is lost, based on the advancement of a scientific view of the body as a mechanism fulfilling useful functions that features alongside the existing model based on religious precedent.

The remaining significant issue to be addressed as regards my methodology is the question of translation, both of words, and of ideas. Existing scholarship on Muscovite medical literature typically makes a distinction made between the ‘local’ (*narodnaia*) and

‘translated’ (*uchenaia/perevodnaia*) medical traditions.<sup>57</sup> In this chapter I don’t adhere strictly to this distinction, as I don’t find it particularly useful for conceptualising my sources. The categorisation of local and translated implies that such a division clearly exists in the source material, when in fact the Muscovite compilers very often do not make the origin of a given text clear. A single manuscript can combine texts and fragments from different cultural traditions; texts composed within Muscovy and material translated from Latin, German, Greek or Polish together. This can make it hard to trace the origin of certain works. There is no consensus within the scholarly community, for instance, as to whether *O chelovechestem” estestve* is a locally-composed text, or a translation. Although the scholar N. K. Gavriushin, who produced the only annotated edition of this tract in 1988, has claimed that it is a natively composed text, there is no particular evidence to suggest this, apart from the fact that a foreign original has not yet been identified.<sup>58</sup> Its convoluted style would suggest otherwise, along with the fact that natural-philosophical treatises on the body tend to be translations. The real issue at stake in this debate is to what extent translated medical texts can be considered to reflect Muscovite ideas about the body. This is a hard question to tackle, since the sources themselves do not make any sustained or clearly identifiable distinction between ‘translated’ and ‘local’ ideas.

There are two ways the question of translation might be approached. First, through comparing the translations with the originals, where available, and second, from comparing these texts to other texts of the same period circulating in Muscovy. In this chapter I combine these approaches, but rely mostly on the second, both in my analysis of terminology in the first section and ideas in the second. This is partly due to the fact that in the case of *O chelovechestem” estestve*, where the original text has not been identified, the first approach is not possible. However, I also believe that the second method provides valid information about reception. On the one hand, comparing anatomical terminology across Muscovite medical literature, whether translated or not, provides information about the contemporary usage of a given word. I can see whether there is a unified approach to translating or rendering certain body parts and conditions

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<sup>57</sup> A. B. Ippolitova, *Russkie rukopisnye travniki XVII-XVIII vekov*, (Moscow: Indrik, 2008), p. 8.

<sup>58</sup> N. K. Gavriushin, ‘Drevnerusskii traktat ‘O chelovechestem” estestve” in *Estestvennonauchnye predstavleniia Drevnei Rusi*, (Moscow: Nauka, 1988), pp. 220-228.



in Old Russian, and if there is not (as there generally isn't), what this might imply. Secondly, comparing the occurrence and more importantly the expression of an idea about the body across contemporary texts of different genres gives an idea about its potential reception, within the circle of a limited educated elite.

Ecclesiastical discourse bears witness to the fact that medical discourse was current in Muscovite elite culture. In seventeenth-century Muscovy the medical and the religious were closely aligned and were considered to provide complimentary approaches to the same task—healing—since illness and sin weren't always distinguishable. Many medical practitioners were also priests, and most of the key scientific tracts of this period were translated by those in the ecclesiastical establishment.<sup>59</sup> Often, translated *lechebniki* from Western Europe were adapted into the Orthodox Muscovite worldview through the addition of an introduction which collated writings from the Church Fathers on the relationship between illness, sin and medicine.<sup>60</sup> As regards the circulation and cultural relevance of the specific ideas I discuss in this chapter, in section two I demonstrate how the concepts in *O chelovechestem* "estestve" and other medical tracts are given explicit religious-moral interpretation in the writings of contemporary cultural figures Simeon of Polatsk (1629-1680), poet to the Muscovite court from 1664 to 1680, and Bishop Dmitrii Tuptalo (1651-1709), in the case of the latter with direct citation to *estestvoslovtsy* (natural philosophers). In this way, I argue that it is impossible to separate the biological from the religious and the political in the construction of sex difference in Muscovy. Anatomy was not considered to be more real, more natural or 'prior' to culture when it came to definitions of men and women. Anatomy wasn't considered to be separate from culture at all. Anatomy, emotion and morality were thought to inform one another. To gain an insight into Muscovite conceptions of men and women, it is necessary to break down the modern divide between anatomy and culture, between sex and gender,

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<sup>59</sup> For instance, Epifanii Slavinetskii, hieromonach of the Chudov monastery in the Moscow Kremlin was effectively in charge of translation and book correction at the *Pechatnyi Dvor* in the mid-seventeenth century where he composed many of the introductions to liturgical books and in 1674 was commissioned to produce a new translation of the Bible from Greek. At the same time Epifanii also taught at the medical school attached to the *Aptekarskii Prikaz* and translated Western scientific texts that were used there, including the aforementioned 1543 anatomical textbook *Epitome* by Andreas Vesalius, commissioned by Patriarch Nikon and completed in 1658.

<sup>60</sup> See, for example, RNB Solov. 23/1482, a herbal featuring the popular Western European midwifery text *De partu hominis* to which a lengthy Slavonic introduction has been added, much of it drawn from the Pandects of Nikon Montenegrin.

understanding how the biological interacts with many other forms of cultural knowledge about gender that are constantly in flux.

**Table 1. Complete list of medical sources referred to in this chapter and known manuscript locations of the source, in order of reference:**

*\*Where more than one manuscript is listed, the one highlighted in red indicates the source referenced for this chapter.*

|     | Source   | Description and contents   | Location (this information is not exhaustive, but refers to the manuscripts I have located and analysed)                                     |
|-----|--|--|--|
| (1) | <i>O chelovechestem" estesteve, o vidimem i nevidimem</i> [second quarter of the 17 <sup>th</sup> century] | 'Original' treatise on the human body produced in Muscovy in the 17 <sup>th</sup> century  | <b>GIM Sinodalnyi collection (Sin.) № 921, fols.124v-129. (mid-17<sup>th</sup> century)</b>  |
|     |  |  | GIM Sin. № 140, fols. 18v- 21. (1630s)   |
|     |  |  | RGB Andr. collection № 2, fols. 414-421v. (1640s)  |
|     |  |  | RGB <i>Undol'skii</i> collection (Und.) № 950, fols. 87v-92r. (1640s)  |
|     |  |  | Edition produced by N. Gavriushin, <i>Estestvennonauchnye predstavleniia drevnei Rusi</i> , (Moscow: Nauka, 1988), pp.220-228.               |
| (2) | <i>Blagoprokhladni tsvetnik vertograd zdraviia</i> [originally translated 1534]                            | Herbal, translation of the German <i>Gart der Gesundheit</i> ( <i>Garden of Health</i> ) by Johannes von Cube (Lübeck, 1492). Commissioned by Metropolitan Daniil and translated by Nikolai Bulev, doctor to Vasili III, in 1534.  | RGADA Fond. 188, № 649. (1616)<br>Unfortunately, the folio numbers are missing for this manuscript due to the poor quality of the microfilm. |
| (3) | <i>Al'bert" slavnoi tainstvo zhenskikh". Eshche o silakh" trav", kamenii, zveri, ptits" i ryb"</i> [1670]  | Translation of Pseudo-Albertus Magnus' <i>De Secretis Mulierum</i> ( <i>On the Secrets of Women</i> ). This text considers the prevailing views of female nature in the medieval and early modern periods from a medical and natural-philosophical perspective, drawing on Hippocratic, Galenic, and Aristotelian theories of sex and reproduction. It covers a range of topics, devoting much of its time to cosmological theory. It was hugely popular across and exists in a large number of copies and translations. | RGB <i>Otdela rukopisei</i> (OR) Fond. 313, №38. (Manuscript dates from the 18 <sup>th</sup> century)  |

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|-----|--|---|--|
| (4) | <i>Kniga o rozhenii mladencheskom</i> ” [16 <sup>th</sup> -17 <sup>th</sup> centuries]                                 | First appears in Muscovy in 1588 as a chapter in a translation of a Polish herbal published in Krakow in 1542 by Hieronymus Spiczinski, entitled <i>O ziolach tutecznych y zamorskich y o mocy ich a ktemu księgi lekarskie wedle rejestru niżej napisanego wszem wielmi użteczne</i> . ( <i>On native and foreign herbs, on their powers and how they can be useful in medicinal books</i> ). The <i>Kniga o rozhenii</i> was one of the most influential texts on midwifery in early modern Europe. It was written originally by German physician Eucharius Rössl in 1513 under the titles <i>Der Swangern Frauwen und Hebammen Rosegarten</i> ( <i>Rosegarden for Pregnant Women and Midwives</i> ), then circulating in Latin from 1536 under the name <i>De partu hominis</i> ( <i>Of the Birth of Man</i> ) and in English from 1540 as <i>The Byrth of Mankynde</i> , otherwyse named <i>The Woman’s booke</i> . I concentrate on the Slavonic redaction of this text which dates from 1665. | RNB Archive of the Saint Petersburg Dukhovnaia Akademia (SPBDA) №.409, fols. 4v-41r. (1665, labelled ‘Vertograd’)  |
|     |  |   | RGB Fond. 228, D. V. Piskarev collection № 196., fols. 7v–48r (17 <sup>th</sup> century, labelled ‘Lechebnik’/‘Kniga problemata’)  |
| (5) | <i>O zachatii chelovechestem</i> ” [15 <sup>th</sup> -17 <sup>th</sup> centuries] (also known as <i>Aleksandrovo</i> ) | Text on conception which circulated in Muscovy from the fifteenth century, almost certainly a translation or summary of a Greek text. I concentrate on the redaction of this text which dates from 1665.  | <div>[Redaction 1] RNB, Kir.-Bel. XII, fols. 222r- 224 (first quarter of the fifteenth century), edition available in <i>PLDR</i>, vol. 5, pp.196-200</div> <div>[Redaction 2] RNB SPBDA №.409, fol. 2. (1665)</div> <div>RGB Fond. 228, D. V. Piskarev collection № 196., fols. 1-2. (17<sup>th</sup> century)</div> |

|     |   |  |  |
|-----|---|--|--|
| (6) | <p><i>Svedeniia po anatomii, fisiologii i pr.</i> [17<sup>th</sup> century]</p> <p>(N.B. This is not the original title but a label given to it in the RNB manuscript catalogue – the title of the work is unknown as it is missing the title page and part of the first chapter)</p> | <p>Pseudo-Aristotelian question and answers on parts of the body. Each chapter discusses a body part. Although there are no chapters on the womb, vagina or penis, there are chapters ‘On Hair’, ‘On Breasts’ and ‘On Milk’.</p> | <p>RNB Q.VI. 20<br/>Later redactive history unknown.</p> |
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## 2. Abandoning anatomy

*O chelovechestem*” *estestve* is known in four manuscripts copies of the 17th century which have been dated to within a timeframe of 1630s-1650s.<sup>61</sup> In order to understand the text’s conception of sex, it is important to consider its framework for conceiving of the body. The text presents two inventories of the body’s constitutive parts; one of ‘visible parts’, including the brain, heart, lungs, stomach, limbs and so on, and one of ‘invisible parts’, which are what we would describe as a combination of sensory, moral and emotional qualities (smell, taste, love, strength, justice, pity, bravery and so on). Both these sets of parts are labelled as ‘limbs’ (уди), indicating that there is no strict difference being drawn between the physical and the moral. It explains that each visible part is there to produce an invisible quality, just as everything is arranged in God’s creation for a purpose. So, for instance, the brain is there to produce reason, and the heart to produce wisdom. As the child grows, both his physical and moral ‘limbs’ grow together, and influence one another. Reminiscent of the Platonic vision of the appetites as located in the belly, *O chelovechestem*” *estestve* associates the passions with the viscera: sadness, hatred, animosity and anger are located in the liver, gall bladder and the spleen respectively. This account of the body defies the strict modern division between the mental/moral and the physical, between the outside of the body and the inside, and between what is considered ‘natural’ to the body and what is learned. The text attributes moral qualities, such as bravery, and emotions, such as sadness, to the function of particular body parts (the blood and the soul and the liver respectively) in the same way that it attributes the ability to float in water to the lungs. In other words, whereas we could classify the latter as a ‘natural’ or ‘physical’ function of the body and the former as non-physical aspects of the mental and social realms, *O chelovechestem*” *estestve* sees all these things as functions of the physical body. In this text, anatomy is not something untouched by the social, something ‘outside’ emotions or moral impulses. In order to understand, then, how the text defines men and women, it is necessary to move beyond anatomy, seeing the biological as it relates to many other culturally accepted ideas about gender.

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<sup>61</sup> N. K. Gavriushin, ‘Drevnerusskii traktat ‘O chelovechestem’ estestve’ in *Estestvennonauchnye predstavleniia Drevnei Rusi*, (Moscow: Nauka, 1988), p. 222.

*O chelovechestem*” *estestve*’s list of ‘visible’ parts is as follows:

В человечестемъ слозе коемуждо оуду свой устав повеленно есть хранити, и вси удове различни суть и державни. И видимъ: а. мозгъ, б. сердце, г. ключа д. печень, е. желчь, с. селезень, з. препона и. желудокъ, ф. **чрева** і. **корень** аі. горло пищное, бі. горло гласное, гі. языкъ, ді. кровавицы, еі. жилы, сі. кровь, зі. зубы, іі. члены, фі. составы, к. перси ка. ребра, кб. чресла, кг. степень, кд. **михирь**, ке. корь и стиги\*. Та бо вся в человеце видима суть и осяжима, яже внеуду и внутрюду человека.<sup>62</sup>

\*In *GIM. Sin. № 140* this appears as *корень и стиги*

*In the human constitution every organ is required to follow its given rule, and every organ has a different power. We see: 1 Brain 2 Heart 3 Lungs 4 Liver 5 Bile 6 Spleen 7 Diaphragm 8 Stomach 9 Chreva 10 Koren’ 11 Oesophagus 12 Windpipe 13 Tongue 14 Blood vessels 15 Tendons 16 Blood 17 Teeth 18 Limbs? 19 Joints? 20 Breast(s) 21 Ribs 22 Loins 23 Height? 24 Mikhir’ 25? These are all visible and tangible in a person, whether external or internal.*

Included in this list are several organs that do not obviously correspond to modern anatomical terminology. I shall begin by focussing on 10 *koren’* (literally, ‘root’) and 24 *mikhir’*.

## 2.1 In search of Muscovite penises

The definition of *mekhir’/mikhir’/mekher’/mekhyr’* is given by the *Slovar’ russkogo iazyka XI-XVII vv* as 1) bladder or 2) male sexual organ.<sup>63</sup> It is not unusual, of course, for a single word to have several meanings, and for the specific meaning to be conveyed by the context. The assumption one might make from this definition is that in some contexts, the word means bladder, and in some, it means penis. I do not deny that this is the case,

<sup>62</sup> *GIM. Sin. № 921*, fol. 124v.

<sup>63</sup> F. P. Filip and G. A. Bogatova, eds., *Slovar’ russkogo iazyka XI-XVII vv.*, vol. 9 (Moscow: Nauka, 1982), p. 131.

at least to a great degree. I propose, however, that this is a reductive way of looking at it. Firstly, specific contexts are often hard to determine, since the *mekhir'* can appear to refer to either or both organs within the space of a single short piece of text. Secondly, in assuming that the word can mean only one of two alternate, separate and bounded meanings, one gendered, and one not, we ignore the conceptual blurring between these body parts that the use of a single term provokes. I propose that if we consider that it might mean both at once, then it opens up a new perspective on how the Muscovites conceived of genitalia, one which challenges the modern, strictly binary view of these parts.

Translating the above passage from *O chelovechestem'' estestve* in the 1980s, N. K. Gavriushin assumes from the context that *mikhir'* in this instance must mean bladder (мочевой пузырь) and *koren'* must mean penis (пенис).<sup>64</sup> However, in the *O chelovechestem'' estestve*'s own explanation of the *koren'* and the *mikhir'*, there is no clear-cut or unambiguous distinction between these body parts:

...Михирь на разсуждение телесных и внутренних болезней. Смотрение же о сем велико есть: яко почюет михирь телесныя болезни утишение и мочию вся являет человеку. И естество убо истекает от михиря являемая, но яже почюет в теле его, такои пушает от себе знаменуя михирь. От михирнаго же корени истекает сеяние, и начатия бывают по естественному совокуплению.<sup>65</sup>

...*The mikhir' is for the perceiving of bodily and internal illnesses. It is important to have care for this: for the mikhir' senses the relieving of bodily illnesses and shows this to a person by means of their urine. For nature/seed flows from the visible (?) mikhir', and that which it senses inside the body is expelled by mikhir' as a sign. From the root of the mikhir' flows seed, and the origins [of life] occur from natural intercourse.*

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<sup>64</sup> N. K. Gavriushin, 'Drevnerusskii traktat 'O chelovechestem'' estestve'' in *Estestvennonauchnye predstavleniia Drevnei Rusi*, (Moscow: Nauka, 1988), p. 221.

<sup>65</sup> GIM. Sin. № 921, fols. 125r-126.



This passage identifies the *mikhir*’ and its ‘root’ (*koren*’), and potentially also the ‘visible (?) *mikhir*’ as elements of a single body part. What exactly these three parts are referring to is unclear, especially as *iavliaemaia* doesn’t appear to agree grammatically with *mikhir*’, and so this could be a scribal error. It seems likely that the text is broadly making a division between internal and external body parts. Slightly confusingly, both the *koren*’ and the ‘visible *mikhir*’ appear to produce seed. The word *estestvo*, although ostensibly meaning ‘nature’, can have several other meanings, particularly in the context of writing about bodies. Eve Levin has shown that it can also be used euphemistically to refer to the genitalia of either sex, while Valerie Kivelson has found that in the context of Muscovite magic spells it is used to refer to seed/ semen. The latter seems a likely possibility here, since Levin’s research also shows that the verb *istekati* (to flow out; used here with both *estestvo* and *seianie*) is used to refer to both male and female climax.<sup>66</sup> *Koren*’ is a word that is used to refer to various things in Old East Slavonic physiological literature. The historical linguist G.C. Barankova defines this word as meaning ‘channel’, ‘duct’, or in some cases ‘nerve’.<sup>67</sup> In the sense of ‘channel’, then, it seems possible that the *koren*’ might be referring to a urinary tract, rather than penis specifically. In the early modern period both men and women were thought to produce seed, meaning that there is no reason, necessarily, why this *koren*’ could not also be attributed to women.<sup>68</sup> If that were the case, the ‘visible *mikhir*’ might correspondingly refer to the penis and the *mikhir*’ to the bladder. However, this set of definitions is complicated by the grammatical issue posed by *iavliaemaia*, which muddies the potential distinction between *mikhir*’ and ‘visible *mikhir*’. Whatever the case, the significant thing is that the clear conceptual distinction that exists in the modern understanding of the body between the penis and the bladder does not hold here. The ‘visible *mikhir*’ and the *koren*’ are conceptualised simply as parts of one whole (the *mikhir*’), rather than separate organs in their own right, and resultantly it is impossible to ascertain how or whether these parts are gendered.

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<sup>66</sup> Levin, Sexual Vocabulary, in *Sexuality and the Body*, ed. by Costlow, Sandler and Vowles, pp.48-49. Thanks go personally to Valerie Kivelson for the information about ‘estestvo’ in the context of magic spells.

<sup>67</sup> G. C. Barankova, ‘Anatomicheskie terminy v russkikh spiskakh perevodnykh pamiatnikov’, in *Istochniki po istorii russkogo iazyka XI-XVII vv.*, (Moscow: Nauka, 1991).

<sup>68</sup> *O chelovechestem*” *estestve* does not specifically reference who produces seed, but I have found references to both male and female seed (*semia/semena*) in three Muscovite texts, the aforementioned *Blagoprophladnyi tsvetnik vertograd zdравиia* (1616), *O zachatii chelovechestem*”/Aleksandrovo, and the 1670 *Al’bert*” *slavnoi tainstvo zhenskikh*”. *Eshche o silakh*” *trav*”, *kamenii*, *zveri*”, *ptits*” *i ryb*”.

Placing *O chelovechestem*'' *estestve* in the context of other medical texts of the same period reinforces the anatomical ambiguity. In the *Blagoprokhladnyi tsvetnik vertograd zdравиia, mikhir'* or *mekher'* appears to refer to the penis, not the bladder:

Аще мужеской полъ прикладывает къ тястилам сиречь кистам, тогда мехерь не подыметя. Сперма того полу оттого прикладывания погибаетъ.<sup>69</sup>

*If the male applies this plant to the testicles, which are balls, then the penis does not become erect. The sperm of this sex will perish as a result of this application.*

The word *mikhir'* does not signify stably in these two texts. The migration of terminology suggests that the male genitals are associated strongly with the bladder and urinary system. These strong associations are lost if one or both *mikhir'* and *koren'* are translated simply as 'penis', which has stronger gendered connotations, and is conceptualised as an organ independent of the bladder. The point being that Gavriushin's translation of *koren'* as 'penis' and *mikhir'* as 'bladder' imposes a genital-focussed, binary view of the body, and the original Muscovite text does not necessarily have these connotations. The text conceptualises the 'root' as part of the bladder, and not predominantly as a male sex organ.

## 2.2 In search for Muscovite wombs, vagina and vulvas

Identifying female reproductive organs proves equally, if not more challenging. In Muscovite literature, there is a wide variety of words employed to indicate the place where the baby gestates, but none of them refer unambiguously to the womb or uterus. Most commonly, medical texts use words referring to the pelvic cavity in a broader, and non-gender-specific, way (*chrevo*, *utroba*, *dno*), which can be equally applied to men. Here I do not mean to suggest that just because the Muscovites chose to use vague, non-gender-specific words that they didn't conceptualise any of the more specific processes going on in the abdomen or didn't use these words in gendered ways, as for example

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<sup>69</sup> RGADA, Фонд.188 № 649 (unfortunately the folio numbers are missing for this manuscript due to the poor quality of the microfilm).

when referring to pregnancy. What is important, I argue, in the case of *chrevo*, *utroba*, *dno* is not so much that they used general words which could mean more than one thing, but that they *did not* use specific gendered terminology, indicating that we should not assume that the body is being conceptualised according to a strict gender binary. I argue that it is anachronistic to read modern binary concepts back onto these non-gender-specific words because it is very often not possible to know what meaning is being conveyed. The meanings of these words were not stable and simultaneously incorporated understandings of reproduction, excretion, and digestion.

In *O chelovechestem*” *estestve*, for example, the *utroba* is described in the following way:

Желудок на изварение брашен, чрево на пропущение утробы<sup>70</sup>

*The stomach is for the digestion of food, the chrevo (belly/abdomen) for the emission of the utroba (that which issues from the abdomen?)*

The distinction between these parts here is somewhat unclear. Read in the context of the stomach (*zheludok*), it would seem that the *chrevo* here refers to the belly/abdomen in a general sense and *utroba* refers to either the part of the body from which emissions are expelled (either the gut or the womb?) or the emissions themselves (waste, menstrual blood, babies?). If we turn, again, to the *Blagoprokhladnyi tsvetnik vertograd zdraviia*, we see that indeed the word *utroba* can refer to both the gut, to waste matter excreted from the gut, and to the place where the baby gestates:

1) ...некие вишни оутробу заключают<sup>71</sup>

*...some cherries cause defecation” (lit. provoke the utroba)*

2) О оутробе кровавой десьентерии названа<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> GIM. Sin. № 921, fol. 125r.

<sup>71</sup> RGADA, Fond.188 № 649.

<sup>72</sup> RGADA, Fond.188 № 649.

...*On diarrhoea* (lit. *bloody utroba*), which is called dysentery

- 3) Аще некая жена во оутробе имеет дитя мертво, та да пиет ромоновы травы толченые мелко в питье и тако дитя мертвой выпадет без болести”<sup>73</sup>

*If a woman has a dead child in her utroba, let her drink the herb camomile chopped up finely and made into a drink and in this way the dead child will come out without causing her pain*

In these examples, the *utroba* defies definition. In Russian today, when applied to a woman, the *utroba* almost exclusively has a reproductive meaning, and refers to the womb. When applied to a man it has a purely digestive meaning, referring to the stomach, belly or abdomen in a general sense. While it is tempting to transfer this understanding back into the past, it doesn't hold for the Muscovite sources. The usage of the word *utroba* consistently blurs sexual and digestive function and does not divide them along gendered lines. In examples (3) and (4) of Table 2 (p.45), which lays out the usage of words referring to the place where the baby gestates, for instance, this word seems to refer to a concrete location in the body, i.e. the abdomen, but in examples (1) and (2) of the same table the word seems to escape a clearly anatomical definition and can be perhaps best described as a process involving digestion and excretion.

There are strong cultural associations between the reproductive system and the digestive system all across Europe in this period, and terminology denoting the womb, stomach and gut is conflated in many languages, including the Latin *venter*.<sup>74</sup> In *De Secretis Mulierum* (*Women's Secrets*), both male and female seed are considered to be excess food, which is distilled and purified in the body to different degrees.<sup>75</sup> The Muscovite *utroba* exemplifies this association, evoking strong conceptual associations with the reproduction and digestive systems and far weaker cultural connotations of

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<sup>73</sup> RGADA, Fond.188 № 649.

<sup>74</sup> See, for example, *De Secretis Mulierum* of Pseudo-Albert Magnus, where *venter* and *uterus* are consistently conflated. Helen Rodnite Lemay, *Women's Secrets: A Translation of Pseudo-Albertus Magnus' "De Secretis Mulierum" with Commentaries* (Albany, New York: State Univ. of New York Press, 1992), p. 66.

<sup>75</sup> RGB *Otdela Rukopisei* Fond. 313 №38, fol. 5r.

gender or sexual difference. In relation to this, it evokes a body defined by *processes*, rather than *essences*.

The apparent lack of concern about gendered anatomy is strengthened if we turn to the few items of vocabulary in Muscovite medical literature that might, theoretically, refer only to the uterus. Generally, these are foreign or foreign-influenced words that do not exist in Muscovite written culture outside of specific medical contexts. For instance, the *Blagoprokhladnyi tsvetnik vertograd zdraviia* uses the word *matrika*, *mastrika* or *matriks*", likely borrowed from the Latin *matrix*, to render more specific uterine conditions or treatments, such as womb fumigation. Interestingly, however, it is not used to translate the Latin *suffocatio matricis* ('suffocation of the womb'). This was a commonly-held belief in Early Modern Europe that foul fluids retained in the womb could give off noxious vapours, which could rise to the lungs, heart and head, suffocating the woman. The Old Russian translation leaves the Latin term intact, and then provides an explanation, stating that this means 'the movement of the depths in women' (*dvizanie dna v"zhonkakh*"). The use of a phrase quite different to the Latin suggests that the translator might well be referring to a condition known in Muscovy, possibly a reference to an earlier medical belief (pretty much condemned by doctors by the Early Modern period), in which the womb wandered about the body and physically affected other organs. If this is the case, and the word *dno* does reflect contemporary usage in Muscovy,

| Table 2. Usage of words referring to the place where the baby gestates                     |  |               |               |   |                 |
|--|--|---------------|---------------|---|-----------------|
| Source   | Usages of  | <i>utroba</i> | <i>chrevo</i> | <i>matrika/matitsa</i>  | <i>lozhesna</i> |
| <b><i>Blagoprokhladnyi tsvetnik vertograd zdraviia (1616)</i></b><br>[РГАДА ф.188 No. 649] | (1) ...некие вишни оутробу заключают<br><i>...some cherries cause defecation (lit. provoke the utroba)</i>   |               |               | (6) и той дым аще жонки в детородный оудъ пускают, тогда матрику вычистит и оугодно к зачатию творит<br><i>...and this steam should be directed into the childbearing organ and it will clean out the matrika</i> |                 |
|  | (2) О оутробе кровавой десьентериа названа<br><i>...on diarrhoea [lit. bloody utroba], which is called dysentery</i>   |               |               |   |                 |
|  | (3) Аще некая жена во оутробе имеет дитя мертво, та да пиет ромоновы травы толченые мелко в питье и тако дитя мертвою выпадет без болести<br><i>If a woman has a dead child in her utroba, let her drink the herb camomile chopped up finely and made into a drink and in this way the dead child will come out without causing her pain</i> |               |               |   |                 |

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| <p><b><i>O zachatii chelovechestem"</i></b><br/> <b>(1665)</b> [РНБ<br/> СПБДА No. 409]</p>   | <p>(4) Ни кто да не пщуеть бездушну быти<br/> сьмени одушевленно бо впадаетъ в<br/> утробу<br/> <i>Let no one think that the seed is soulless,<br/> for it falls into the womb [utroba] ensouled</i></p> |  |   |   |
| <p><i>Al'bert" slavnoi tainstvo zhenskikh". Eshche o silakh" trav", kamenii, zverei, ptits" i ryb" (1670)</i><br/> [РГБ ОР Ф.313 №38]</p> |  | <p>(5) О рождении плода<br/> - зачатия во чреве<br/> матернемъ<br/> <i>On birth, and on the conception of the<br/> foetus in the mother's<br/> womb [chrevo]</i></p> | <p>(7) Матица женская частее<br/> страждетъ удушие<br/> <i>The womb [matitsa] often<br/> suffers from choking</i></p> | <p>(8) внегода же два семена<br/> восприята бываетъ въ<br/> ложесна жены<br/> затыкаются...то бываетъ<br/> удержание месячныхъ въ<br/> жене<br/> <i>...when the two seeds are<br/> received into the womb<br/> [lozhesna] then it<br/> closes...which is why pregnant<br/> women don't have periods</i></p> |

then the use of a very euphemistic and non-specific word strengthens the argument that the reproductive organs were not clearly distinguished from other internal abdominal organs.

The two gynaecological texts *Al'bert" slavnoi tainstvo zhenskikh". Eshche o silakh" trav", kamenii, zveri, ptits" i ryb"* (*The glorious Albert's secrets of women. Also on the powers of herbs, stones, beasts, birds and fish*, a translation of the Pseudo-Albert Magnus' *De Secretis Mulerium*) (Table 1, example 3) and the *Kniga o rozhenii mladencheskom"* (*Childbirth Book*, a translation of Eucharius Rösslin's *Der schwangern Frauen und Hebammen Rosengarten*) (Table 1, example 4), on the other hand, use the word *matitsa*. The use of this word is potentially evidence of a loan shift, which is a change in the meaning of a word resulting from the influence of a corresponding word in a foreign language.<sup>76</sup> In the *Kniga o rozhenii mladencheskom"*, the translator uses *matitsa* in every instance that the Polish original he copies from uses *macica*, the Polish for uterus. It seems, however, that this word did not originally mean uterus in Old Slavonic. Sreznesvskii's dictionary of Old Slavonic, which relies mostly on sources from the eleventh to fourteenth centuries, records three meanings: 'mother', 'beginning or foundation' and 'magnet'.<sup>77</sup> The *Slovar' russkogo iazyka XI-XVII vv.*, records several additional meanings, including 'the supporting part of something' and 'the keel of a boat', but does not record any usage of this word to refer to the uterus before the sixteenth century, and then, significantly, only in agricultural and medical handbooks translated from Western European originals.<sup>78</sup> Possibly, at a loss for how to render the Polish word, the translator adopted an existing Old Rus word to a new purpose?

There is one biblical word, *lozhesna*, a calque from New Testament Greek that, according to Sreznevskii and the *Slovar' russkogo iazyka XI-XVII vv.* refers unequivocally to the womb. However, even this word is, on occasion, applied to men in Muscovite literature, as in Ivan IV's epistle to the monks of the Kirill-Belozerskii monastery dating from 1573 that in turn cites a lengthy passage from the writings of the

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<sup>76</sup> RNB SPBDA (Archive of the Saint Petersburg Dukhovnaia Akademia) No. 409 (1665), fols. 4-41r (collection labelled a 'Vertograd').

<sup>77</sup> I. I. Sreznevskii, *Materialy dlia slovaria drevne-russkogo iazyka po pis'mennym" pamiatnikam"*, vol. 2 (Saint Petersburg: Imperatorskaia Akademiia Nauk, 1893), p. 119.

<sup>78</sup> F. P. Filip and G. A. Bogatova, eds., *Slovar' russkogo iazyka XI-XVII vv.*, vol. 9 (Moscow: Nauka, 1982), p. 44. It is also worth noting that there is no record of the modern term *matka* used to refer to the uterus until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Iu. S. Sorokin, ed. *Slovar' russkogo iazyka XVIII veka*, vol. 12 (Saint Petersburg: Nauka, 2001) p. 92.



martyr Bishop Basil of Amasya in which the word *lozhesna* is attributed to a bearded monk as part of a description of the monks annihilation of his own flesh.<sup>79</sup>

As far as the female genitals are concerned, they too seem to be elusive. In Latin, the word *vagina* wasn't used stably until the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The word *vulva* was in use, but did not have a fixed meaning, referring variously to the external female genitals taken as a whole or, in the work of certain writers, specifically to the womb.<sup>80</sup> Sarah Jane Miller, in her analysis of the Latin *De Secretis Mulierum*, notes that Pseudo-Albertus uses the word *vulva* sometimes with reference to the external female genitals and sometimes to refer to the vaginal passage.<sup>81</sup> This lack of specificity seems to be accentuated in the Slavonic sources. There is one paragraph in the Slavonic translation of Albert Magnus' *De Secretis Mulierum* (1670) where the Latin original uses the word *vulva* to refer to the vagina as the 'gates of the womb', and the Slavonic utterly fails to render the distinction between womb and vagina.

**Table 3. A comparison of the Slavonic translation with the original Latin of Pseudo-Albert Magnus' *De Secretis Mulierum* (1670)**

| Slavonic   | Latin   |
|--|---|
| «...чесо ради ложесно нарицается, яко бы животь материнской; зане суть врата чревная и ея посделная часть глаголется членовная кожица, понеже члень есть конець того живота, тако и ложесна. Затыкается яко едина кожици такъ, яко по Авиценнию, ни едина бы могла аглица внити» <sup>82</sup> | Nota, quod vulva dicitur quasi valva, quia est janua ventris, & ejus ultima pars dicitur membrana, quia membrum ani au test finis vulvo, & ita matrix clauditur sicut una bursa, ita quod secundum Avicennam un acus intrare non posset |

<sup>79</sup> 'Poslanie Ivana IV v Kirillo-Belozerskii monastyr'', in *Akty Istoricheskie* vol. 1 (Saint Petersburg: Arkheograficheskaiia Komissiiia, 1841) p. 376.

<sup>80</sup> Daniel Jacquart and Claude Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages*, trans. Matthew Adamson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988) p. 24.

<sup>81</sup> Sarah Jane Miller, *Medieval Monstrosity and the Female Body* (New York: Routledge, 2010) p. 124.

<sup>82</sup> *Al'bert'' slavnoi tainstvo zhenskikh''*. *Eshche o silakh'' trav''*, *kamenii, zverei, ptits'' i ryb''*, РГБ ОР Ф.313 №38 (18<sup>th</sup> century), f. 5v.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>...for this reason the womb (lozhesna) is called like the mother's belly (zhivot'), because it is the gate of the womb/belly? (adjective from: chrevo) and its last part is called the membrane of the member, since the member is the end of that belly (zhivot') and the womb (lozhesna) closes up like a purse so that, according to Avicenna, not even a needle might enter</p> | <p>And note that the vulva is named from the word valva [folding door] because it is the door of the womb, and the extreme part of the vulva is called the membrane because the "member" of the "anus" is the end of the vulva. The womb closes up like a purse so that, as Avicenna says, not even a needle can enter...<sup>83</sup></p> |
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This passage makes little sense in any language, and it is difficult to settle on a good translation. But what we can see, is that where the Latin makes a distinction between the vulva and the matrix, the Slavonic makes no distinction, employing the word *lozhesna* to both. The second instance in this passage where the Latin refers to the vulva, the Slavonic uses the word *zhivot'* (belly).

The examples of the uses of the words *mikhir'* and *utroba/chrevo/lozhesna/matitsa* demonstrate that anatomy didn't stably participate in the differentiation of male and female bodies. It is a modern understanding of the body that underlies N.K. Gavriushin's translation of *mikhir'* as bladder, and *koren'* as penis, informed by the modern practice of clearly delineating the genitalia into binary categories. In the Muscovite original these are understood as a common body part which is conceptualised predominantly as part of the urinary system. Similarly, Muscovite sources rarely employ specific gendered terminology to delineate the female body from the male body, even when describing gendered bodily conditions, such as pregnancy. Although Muscovites were aware that women gave birth, an examination of the Muscovite *rhetoric* surrounding female reproduction suggests that anatomy is not an unambiguous or stable signifier of female difference. Usage of the words *utroba*, *chrevo* and *dno* persistently blurs sexual, digestive and excretive function, and medical texts seem unconcerned about ascribing these body parts to a particular gender. If differences between male and female organs are perceived, they are not granted very much attention. This is because the reproductive organs are associated with several biological processes at once, rather than seen as dedicated to a single function. The focus on process, flux and cycles operating together in the abdomen

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<sup>83</sup> Helen Rodnite Lemay, *Women's Secrets: A Translation of Pseudo-Albertus Magnus' "De Secretis Mulierum" with Commentaries* (Albany, New York: State Univ. of New York Press, 1992), p. 66.

means that the human body was not imagined in terms of clearly defined organs performing discrete functions. In other words, if reproduction, digestion and excretion were interrelated cycles performed by the same set of organs, then these organs could not be clearly divided into binary groups. This meant, therefore, that gender identities were not determined in an essentialist way by the presence or absence of reproductive organs.

### 3. Gender hierarchy and bodily practices

In this section I consider what bearing the conceptualisation of the body primarily as a set of processes, rather than a set of organs, has on broader Muscovite conceptions of gender. I argue that there is a fixed cultural hierarchy in which men are superior to women, but that within this hierarchy what it means to be a man or a woman anatomically speaking does not rest on a binary distinction of reproductive organs and that defining the boundaries between male and female bodies is sometimes fraught.

When *O chelovechestem* "estestve" does differentiate between men and women, which occurs in a short passage towards the end of the tract, it is the concept of bodily process or its social counterpart, bodily practice—rather than physical 'essence'—that comes to the fore.

...Брадний власи зламение есть мужеское, да видом познан будет. А юным же одеяния разна суть от женских риз. Женам бо брадныя власы не даны суть, да долгую лепоту лица имеют, да любими будут и кормими каждо подружием своим, и огреваеми в надрах их. Но в брады место перси им даны суть. Да от тела своего любовию кормят младенца родившегося им и тем согнездну любовь имут.<sup>84</sup>

...*Beards are a sign of the male sex, so that they can be recognised visually. Young men's dress differs from women's garb. For women are not given beards, so that their faces remain beautiful for longer, so that they will be loved and fed by their partners and warmed in their bosom. And instead of beards they are given breasts.*

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<sup>84</sup> GIM. Sin. № 921, fols. 127r-128.

*This is so that they can feed the child born to them from their own bodies with love, and in this way have familial love.*

At first sight, it might appear that there is a binary anatomical distinction being made here between beards and breasts. Upon closer examination of this passage, however, it is clear that although the text is making distinctions between men and women, this is not occurring at the anatomical level primarily: in its attempt to distinguish between male and female bodies, the text conflates secondary sex characteristics and clothing. Beards and breasts are evoked together with clothes as the primary differentiating markers between men and women, in order that ‘they [men] can be recognised visually’. From this passage it is clear that the biological and the social are not being conceived as separate realms of knowledge as in the modern understanding, which tends to conceive one as ‘real’ and the other ‘constructed’. *O chelovechestem” estestve* forces us to reconsider the relationship between anatomy and culture. Here, anatomy interacts with and is informed by social ideas and structures.

The implication to be drawn from this extract is that whatever truly distinguishes men and women is not tangible and that secondary sex characteristics and clothes act together as ‘markers’ of gender. One could assume from this statement, for instance, that it is possible to fail to ‘recognise’ a man if he does not have a beard, or if he does not wear the correct clothes. Gendered anatomy is only expressed, and only takes on meaning, through reference to social scenarios. Here, the beard is a social signifier; a symbol of masculine authority. Having a beard distinguishes you as a man, in the logic of *O chelovechestem” estestve*, predominantly because it prevents people from mistaking you for a woman. Women do not have beards and are therefore appealing to their husbands and must be supported by them. This passage only imagines a woman within the relational context of the family. While women are identified as having ‘breasts’, the word chosen here—*persi*—is in fact a gender-neutral word for the breast or chest often applied to both sexes. This suggests that what is important is less the fact that women *have* breasts, but that they feed children, a bodily *process* that is representative of their relative status to men. Even in the explanation of breastfeeding, sexual difference is never effectively accounted for in anatomical terms. Men and women’s behaviour in fact bears a striking resemblance to one another, specifically the way in which loving and feeding are evoked

in relation to the interior of the body. The text describes that the mother loves and feeds her child *ot tela* (from her body), and that the man loves, feeds and warms his partner in his bosom. In both instances, love is produced in the interior of the body and transmitted outwards to the loved object. What separates men from women is the gender hierarchy in which they are placed, that dictates *to whom* this duty of love and feeding should be performed (the husband to the wife, the mother to the child). The meaning of gendered anatomy, here, is informed and undergirded by a specific social context—the family—that privileged male superiority and authority over women.

This is different from a gender binary in the modern conception precisely because the underlying principle is primarily social, and only secondarily biological. Anatomy is first and foremost a marker of a societal principle—that men have authority over women—rather than an ontological marker in the way that we see it, as the thing that constitutes difference between men and women. This means that its role and meaning in definitions of gender in Muscovite texts is unstable and liable to change as social practices change. Anatomy in *O chelovechestem*’ *estestve* signifies social norms, in a similar way to clothes. Firstly, facial hair is not universal to the male population but only to those over a certain age (who are deemed socially mature). Moreover, although facial hair is inherent to adult men, deciding whether or not to grow a beard is a *practice* configured in the social realm, like dressing, and in the seventeenth century men were ever more frequently choosing to shave.<sup>85</sup> In a similar way, the production of milk is not universal to the female population, only to mothers. And again, although producing milk is inherent, breastfeeding is a socially configured practice. Women who choose not to or cannot feed do not produce milk, and in this period elite women were often choosing not to breastfeed (wet nurses were commonly employed in the higher levels of Muscovite society).<sup>86</sup> *O chelovechestem*’ *estestve*’s definition of man and woman is as a social condition rather than an ontological state, not so much about *what* parts men and women have but what they *do* (or not) with their bodies.

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<sup>85</sup> Lindsey Hughes, “‘A Beard is an Unnecessary Burden’: Peter I’s Laws on Shaving and their Roots in Early Russia”, in *Russian Society and Culture and the Long Eighteenth Century. Essays in Honour of Anthony G. Cross*, ed. by Roger Bartlett and Lindsey Hughes (Munster: Lit Verlag, 2004) pp. 25-29.

<sup>86</sup> Levin, ‘Childbirth in Pre-Petrine Russia’ in *Russia’s Women*, ed. by Evans Clements, Alpern Engel and Worobec, p. 50.

There is another Old Russian anatomical tract dating from the seventeenth century that also emphasises the beard and breastfeeding as indicators of male and female difference. This text is structured in a pseudo-Aristotelian question-and-answer format, which almost certainly points to it being a translation, but its original has not been unidentified. The manuscript copy I examined is missing the title page and part of the first chapter, so I refer to it by the label given to it in the Russian National Library manuscript catalogue, which is *Svedeniia po anatomii, fisiologii i pr. (Accounts of anatomy, physiology and so on)*.<sup>87</sup> The text is divided into sections dedicated to different body parts and processes. It does not dedicate separate chapters to the genitals or primary reproductive organs (Chapter 18: *O legkom" i utrobe* deals with breathing and digestion, and Chapter 24: *O vishkakh" i mekhire* with digestion and urination, placed alongside chapters on the spleen and stomach). It does, however, contain Chapter 1: 'On Hair' (*O vlasakh"*), Chapter 15: 'On the Chest' (*O persekh"*) and Chapter 16: On Breasts (*O siskakh"*), and in general places more emphasis than the other texts on making bodily distinctions between men and women.

As well as a description of adulthood as the age when men start to grow out their hair and women start to grow breasts, *Svedeniia po anatomii* also dedicates a series of questions and answers to male and female body hair, experience of illness and even teeth.<sup>88</sup> Although these examples might seem to be evidence of a fixed anatomical division between men and women, *Svedeniia po anatomii* in fact relies on the concept of a spectrum of gender dictated by body temperature, rather than anatomy. Moreover, people can change their place on this spectrum through their engagement in social practices, such as beard shaving. In the chapter 'On Hair' (*O vlasakh"*), which opens the text, is the question: '*Cheso radi brityia muzhie ne lyseiut?*' (Why don't clean-shaven men go bald?).<sup>89</sup> The explanation is that they have a 'female constitution', which means that they are 'too wet and cold' (*takovyia vsi byvaiut" zhenskago prirozhdeniia...v" takovykh" sut' izlishniaia volgost', iako i v" zhenakh"*).<sup>90</sup> The logic behind this is thermal

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<sup>87</sup> *Svedeniia po anatomii*, RNB Q.VI.20 (17<sup>th</sup> century). Unfortunately, there were no marked folio numbers in this manuscript, so I refer to the chapters of the text itself.

<sup>88</sup> For the definitions of puberty, identified as about thirteen years old, see Chapters 1 and 16. Some of the wilder conclusions the text makes are that women have more frequent headaches and fewer teeth than men.

<sup>89</sup> *Svedeniia po anatomii*, Ch. 1: 'On Hair' (*O vlasakh"*).

<sup>90</sup> *Svedeniia po anatomii*, Ch. 1: 'On Hair' (*O vlasakh"*).

theory, inherited from the Ancient Greek philosophers, that men are naturally hot, and thus expel impurities more easily, of which hair is a form. Women, however, are colder and wetter, which causes them to retain impurities and find it harder to grow hair (women's wetness and coldness is used in the text as a whole to support a series of arguments about women not developing properly and being smaller and weaker than men<sup>91</sup>).

While the text appears to set up a binary bodily hierarchy here, it in fact reveals a spectrum where people can be more or less masculine or feminine. While the beard is framed as an indicator of maleness, 'clean-shaven men' are recognised as an existing, but lesser, category. What determines a person's position on this spectrum is ostensibly biological—a 'female' constitution—but it is in fact dictated by prevailing social norms. Although being clean-shaven is presented as a state one cannot help, the very use of this word (*brityia*) demonstrates that it is not the *ability* to grow a beard that makes the man, but the *choice* to grow a beard, and to thus live up to social ideals of masculinity. This text showcases very clearly the blurred lines between anatomy and culture. Anatomy is the physical manifestation of social principles; a means of expressing and underpinning them.

In Chapter 16: 'On Breasts' (*O siskakh*) female difference is explained anatomically once again with reference to social hierarchy. In answer to the question: '*Cheso radi muzhie ne imeiut'' velikikh'' sostsev?*' (Why don't men have big nipples?) the text explains that this is, again, because men are naturally hotter than women. Women are too wet to grow beards, but for this reason are able to breastfeed children (again, another in the series of examples of women cast as weak, inferior or incapable in comparison to men based on the idea that they are colder and wetter internally).<sup>92</sup> Anatomy, here, reflects and supports the prevailing hierarchy in the institution of the Muscovite family, where men have authority and dominance and women are responsible for childrearing.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> See for example, the argument that women have narrower chests because they do not develop fully, which is also linked to a lack of bravery in Ch. 15: 'On the Chest' (*O persekh*). *Svedeniia po anatomii* is the second of three Muscovite texts I have found that refer to thermal theory, the others being *Aleksandrovo* (15<sup>th</sup> century, see p.28) and *Al'bert'' slavnoi tainstvo zhenskikh''*. *Eshche o silakh'' trav''*, *kamenii, zverei, ptits'' i ryb''* (1670).

<sup>92</sup> *Svedeniia po anatomii*, Ch. 16: 'On Breasts' (*O siskakh*).

<sup>93</sup> This understanding of male and female bodily difference theoretically excludes, for example, nuns, who rejected family life.

These textual accounts of what men and women are makes it clear that anatomy does not constitute sex difference in any inherent or consistent way. Bodily difference is conceptualised according to an existing socio-religious worldview structured by a strict gendered social hierarchy. In this hierarchy, men and women's respective positions are signalled by what they *do* with their bodies, rather than by body parts. In this model, it is the foundational *social* principles of masculine authority, on the one hand, and feminine responsibility for children, on the other, that form the essential difference between men and women, whereas the way in which these principles are understood to manifest in the body, and the meaning of this bodily difference, is open to a degree of negotiation as customs change. Returning to my original definition of sex as the relationship between body and gender, I can now nuance this definition for the Muscovite context. If, in the modern day, the perceived<sup>94</sup> relationship between these things is fixed—in other words, the body is seen as the 'natural' base onto which gender identity is constructed—in Muscovy the perceived relationship between gender and the body was not static, but constantly under negotiation.

In seventeenth-century Muscovy, beard shaving and breastfeeding were the subject of cultural debate, embodying ideas about masculinity and femininity that were in flux as a result of influence from Ukraine, Poland and the Catholic West. Shaving was becoming an increasingly widespread practice, at least among elite men, which contemporary critics blamed on Polish trends. While the majority of Muscovite elite women still did not breastfeed their own children but gave them to wet nurses, breastfeeding gradually became subject to new sorts of representation in cultural production. The official position of the Church and political establishment on the moral significance of these practices was under negotiation and was quite inconsistent, and this was reflected in representations of breasts and beards by elite ecclesiastical figures which oscillated between veneration and condemnation. Both breast and beard were multi-valent symbols.

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<sup>94</sup> I wish to stress that I am speaking here only about conventions for perceiving this relationship, not suggesting that the relationship itself has actually shifted. On the contrary, the relationship between body and gender remains a lot more fluid in the modern day than biological textbooks might suggest and continues to be dictated by cultural trends and debates. However, modern society nonetheless tends to *perceive* it as fixed, since we have come to view it through the lens of biological science.



#### 4. Breasts and beards under debate in seventeenth-century Muscovy

The final section of this chapter tracks shifts in the representation of beard shaving and breastfeeding in late-seventeenth century homiletic and polemical writing, focussing on a selection of works by key figures in or close to the Muscovite ecclesiastical establishment: Patriarch Adrian, Bishop Dmitrii Tuptalo and Simeon of Polatsk. This section has two aims. Firstly, to demonstrate the point made in the earlier sections that the way gender manifested in the body in Muscovy and the meaning of this bodily difference was not fixed by showcasing the varied interpretations of these bodily practices by ecclesiastical authority figures. Secondly, to make a more precise point—that breastfeeding was increasingly cemented as a gender marker by the ecclesiastical elite over this period. In both the works of Simeon of Polatsk and Dmitrii Tuptalo ideas about feminine caregiving and its connection to moral purity and stability are negotiated and expressed through representations of breastfeeding, a trend that would continue into the eighteenth century.<sup>95</sup> Concomitantly, the beard as a marker of masculine authority and a signifier of moral stability was lost. In his polemic Dmitrii advances a scientific framework for conceiving the body based on the fulfilment of useful functions, as well as relying (like his predecessors) on scriptural precedent, which he uses to reject the beard but enforce breastfeeding. I consider how, on the one hand, Dmitrii is responding to changes in custom brought on in part by the Petrine reforms, and on the other I tentatively consider his work as part of a broader epistemological shift in the way the body is being conceived across Europe in this period.

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<sup>95</sup> This trend was not unique to homiletic writing but was also gaining traction in late seventeenth-century Muscovite visual culture. Both Eve Levin and Valerie Kivelson, for example, have noted that visual depictions of breasts in iconography prior to the seventeenth century usually symbolised sexual sin and could be applied in this symbolic capacity to both male and female figures (see Levin, *Sexual Vocabulary*, in *Sexuality and the Body*, ed. by Costlow, Sandler and Vowles, p. 49. Kivelson, 'Sexuality and Gender in Early Modern Russian Orthodoxy', in *Letters from Heaven*, ed. by Himka and Zayarnyuk, pp. 100-125). In the seventeenth century, however, these images began to co-exist with new images of mammary veneration borrowed from Western Europe. For example, three copies of icons of the Mother of God breastfeeding the infant Jesus (a type known as the *Blazhennoe chrevo*, a variant of the iconography known as *Mlekopitatel'nitsa*) are known to have been produced in Muscovy in the period from the late sixteenth century to the late seventeenth century. One was held in the *Novodevichi* female monastery in Moscow, one in the Annunciation cathedral in the Moscow Kremlin and the third, produced in 1664, was held in the Spaso-Evfimiev monastery in Suzdal. This is significant because this type of iconography, while common in the Catholic tradition of Western Europe, had never been widespread in the Muscovite tradition, existing prior to that in one known copy dating from the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. N. P. Kondakov and N. P. Likhachev in their analysis of this icon note the stylistic connection to Italian art of the fourteenth century and ascribe the original icon to an Italian school.

For many centuries the Orthodox Church had periodically defended the beard as a symbol of the true faith against heretical others. Prohibitions against beard shaving are found across Muscovite history but intensify in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as more people begin to shave following the ‘Western fashion’, and concomitantly the beard comes under particular political and moral scrutiny.<sup>96</sup> Condemnation of beard shaving features, for example, in the writings of Metropolitan Daniil in the first half of the sixteenth century, the 1551 *Stoglav* Council, the *Sobornoe izlozhenie Patriarkha Filareta* (1620), in the *Sluzhebnik Patriarkha Iosifa* (1647), the *Kirillova kniga* (a collection of anti-heretical texts published in Moscow under Patriarch Iosif in 1644) and the *Kniga o vere* (published in Moscow in 1648). The ecclesiastical and cultural debates on beard shaving became increasingly heated in the second half of the seventeenth century. In 1675 Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich passed a decree banning German customs, his son Feodor Alekseevich passed a similar ban on foreign styles in 1680.<sup>97</sup> However, as Lindsey Hughes notes, one foreign observer mistakenly assumed Feodor had on the contrary permitted the ‘cutting of hair, shaving of beards and wearing Polish tunics’, so widespread were these practices in Muscovy in actuality.<sup>98</sup> Eventually, the debate culminated in Peter I’s official condemnation of the beard and embrace of European clean-shaven styles, marked by the introduction of the infamous ‘beard tax’ decree passed in 1705.<sup>99</sup>

These discussions of beard shaving demonstrate that what it meant to be a man was bound up in contemporary debates about what it meant to be Orthodox and to be a Muscovite subject. Just a decade before the nationwide ban on beards, in a sermon written in the 1690s, Patriarch Adrian of the Muscovite Orthodox Church fervently defends the beard as a cornerstone both of Orthodox identity and Muscovite social order. His sermon echoes the prevailing medical argument expressed in *Svedenii po anatomii* that men,

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<sup>96</sup> Hughes, “‘A Beard is an Unnecessary Burden’”, pp. 21-34.

<sup>97</sup> Hughes, “‘A Beard is an Unnecessary Burden’”, p. 25., see also P. V. Sedov, ‘Peremeny v odezhde praviashchikh verkhov Rossii v kontse XVII v.’, in *Mesto Rossii v Evrazii*, ed. by Gyula Szvák (Budapest: Magyar Rendszerintézet, 2001), pp. 172-81 and ‘Reforma sluzhilogo plat’ia pri Fedore Alekseeviche’ in *Trudy vsероссийской научной конференции ‘Kogda Rossiia molodaia muzhala s geniemi Petra’*, vol. 1, (Pereslavl’-Zalesskii: Pereslavl’-Zalesskii istoriko-arkhitekturnyi i khudozhestvennyi muzei-zapovednik, 1992), pp. 77-83.

<sup>98</sup> Hughes, “‘A Beard is an Unnecessary Burden’”, p. 25.

<sup>99</sup> For details, see Evgenii V. Akelev, ‘The Barber of All Russia: Lawmaking, Resistance and Mutual Adaptation during Peter the Great’s Cultural Reforms’, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 17.2 (Spring 2016), 241-275, and ‘When did Peter the Great order Beards Shaved?’, *Quaestio Rossica*, 5.4 (2017), 1107–1130.

being hot, developed fully, whereas women retain cold and wet, and thus do not produce as much hair. He inserts this argument into a religious framework, asserting that bearded men are ‘complete’ and therefore superior, whereas women, being beardless, are inferior:

Мужа и жену сотвори, положив разнство видное между ими, яко знамение некое: мужу убо благолепие, яко начальнику – браду израсти, жене же яко несовершенной, но подначальной, онаго благолепия не даде, яко да будет подчинена, зрящи мужа своего красоту, себе же лишена тоя красоты и совершенства, да будет смиренна и всегда покорна.<sup>100</sup>

*[God] made men and women with a difference between them, a sort of symbol: to the man he gave splendour, as a superior, the ability to grow a beard, and to the woman, who is incomplete and inferior, he did not give this splendour, so she will be subordinate and, looking at the beauty of her husband and seeing herself lacking this beauty and perfection, will be humble and always submissive.*

Adrian sees the beard here as a visual symbol or marker—*iako znamenie neкое*—placed there by God as an indicator of a more profound truth, of men’s inherent superiority to women. The body itself is simply an external manifestation of knowledge already accepted in Orthodox culture.

In Adrian’s sermon, as in the other writings on the subject that precede him, it is impossible to disentangle gender deviance from a subversion of social and religious hierarchy. There are two reasons given consistently as to why beard-shaving is bad: firstly, that it is ‘a Latin and pagan heresy’ (*poganykh latynskaia i ereticheskaia predaniia*) forbidden by Holy Scripture, and secondly, that it makes men ‘look like women’ (*zhenoobraznyi*).<sup>101</sup> These two reasons tend to be cited in tandem, linking gender transgression with heresy. The word *zhenoobraznyi* makes it clear that the problem with beard shaving is not that it transforms a man *into* a woman, but that he enters an ambiguous liminal state. Adrian writes that those who shave their beards and

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<sup>100</sup> G. Esipov, ed., ‘Okruzhnoe poslanie patriarkha Adriana’ in *Raskol’nich’i dela 18 stolet.*, vol. 2 (Saint Petersburg: 1863).

<sup>101</sup> D. E. Kozhanchikov, ed., *Stoglav*, (Saint Petersburg: 1863), p. 124.

grow out their hair corrupt the image of God, becoming neither men, nor women. He goes on to compare these people to cats, dogs and monkeys. Adrian insists that bodies which violate the notions of masculinity through beard shaving are deviant, immoral, and are described as transgressing the boundaries not only of Orthodoxy, but also of humanity.

In her book on the social construction of sex difference, gender theorist Judith Butler draws a distinction between ‘intelligible’ and ‘unthinkable’ bodies in society.<sup>102</sup> She suggests that it is only in opposition to these ‘unthinkable’ bodies that the ‘intelligible’, or normative, bodies, come to be intelligible. Adrian’s sermon demonstrates a reliance on circumscribing the form of female and animal bodies against which he articulates what constitutes a ‘man’. Men who shave become ‘like women’, or like animals, occupying an uneasy space beyond intelligibility. The beard is the only thing holding the man together both conceptually in this sermon. When the beard is shaved, it would appear, the man dissolves. Men and women, here, are clearly social categories. The beard is primarily a marker of Muscovite cultural identity—of masculine authority and Orthodox righteousness—and its value as a marker of biological sex is secondary.

Less than a decade after Patriarch Adrian wrote his tirade against beard shaving, however, in 1705, Peter the Great passed the decree declaring a tax on beards. Shaving became the norm, rather than a deviance from it. Shortly afterwards, between 1708 and 1709, Dmitrii Tuptalo (Bishop of Rostov) wrote a treatise defending beard shaving, as part of his wider polemic against Old Belief entitled *Rozysk o raskol' nicheskoï brynskoï vere* (*Trial of the heretical Brynsk faith*). In this treatise Dmitrii lays out a detailed logical analysis of whether beard shaving can be considered sinful, going first in detail through the Old Testament, then the New Testament, the Church Councils and various items of canon law that mention beard shaving. In one section of these treatise, entitled ‘What is a beard?’ (*Chto est' brada?*) Dmitrii, relying on the same broad scientific understanding of the beard as Adrian, presents the argument that that the beard is ‘unnecessary’ and can be shaved:

Брада есть власъ нечувственъ, излишние человеческого тела, вещество видимое, осязательное, жизни человеческой не нужное, ниже бо живить человека, ни умерщвляеть; вещество временное; съ теломъ въ персть

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<sup>102</sup>Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, pp. xi-xii.

гробную вселяющееся, и расыпающееся, прежде смерти мертвое, недейственное, ниже что пользующее, ни вредящее, растущее при влажных тела частех. Якоже бо на земли, идеже блатное, мокрое место, тамо растеть излишняя трава, осоко и тростие, сие и на теле человеческомъ при местехъ влажныхъ растутъ власы.<sup>103</sup>

*The beard is unfeeling hair, an excess of the human body, a visible and tangible thing unnecessary to human life, for it neither nourishes a person, nor kills them; it is a transient substance which turns to grave dust along with the body and is scattered, dead even before death itself, ineffectual, neither benefiting nor harming, growing in the moist areas of the human body. Just as in a boggy and damp place on the earth you will find an excess of grass growing, on the moist places of the human body you will find hair.*

For Dmitrii, clearly, the beard is no longer the primary bodily marker of masculine authority.<sup>104</sup> On the one hand, this can be explained by socio-political changes, since he is writing a theological argument to support a policy recently enacted by Peter I. On the other, however, Dmitrii's writing reveals a subtle transformation in the way in which socio-moral value is being inscribed into the body.

This passage again echoes, albeit indirectly, the medical understanding of hair laid out in *Svedenii po anatomii*, that hair is the excretion of excess fluid that accumulates in the body, (and that men, being hotter, expel this fluid more efficiently, which is why they grow beards and why they are not so wet inside). Adrian uses this knowledge to form the argument that men are superior, citing the prevailing Orthodox view that man was made in God's image. Dmitrii, however, measures the value of the beard based on a completely different set of criteria: use, or contribution to the healthy functioning of the body. Whereas Adrian relies predominantly on the citation of Church Fathers, scriptural precedent and existing anti-Catholic and anti-Lutheran polemical tropes, Dmitrii

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<sup>103</sup> Dmitrii Tuptalo, *Rozysk o raskol' nicheskoï brynskoï vere* (Moscow: 1745), p. 338.

<sup>104</sup> In the Petrine era, masculine superiority starts to be marked onto the body in other ways. For example, in one Petrine etiquette manual, the *Iunosti chestnoe zertsalo ili pokazanie k zhteiskomu obkhozheniiu. Sobranie ot raznykh avtorov*, (*The Honourable Mirror of Youth or instruction on manners for life. Collected by different authors*), published in Saint Peterburg in 1717, markers of masculinity include gait, as well as conversational ability and dress.

measures the value of body hair according to a more abstract or clinical notion of ‘use’. The lexicon of functionality stands out clearly in this passage; he argues that the beard can be removed because it is ‘unnecessary’, ‘neither nourishing nor harming’, ‘ineffectual’ and so on. Dmitrii’s emphasis on function, I argue, echoes aspects of the growing tendency in the work of contemporary Western European natural philosophers by to conceptualise aspects of the natural world, including the body, as mechanical systems. What makes this text different from Adrian’s sermon is not that Dmitrii advances new scientific knowledge, *per se*, but that he constructs his argument according to a different logic, advancing a new framework for conceiving of the physical body and its relationship to the holy. Earlier in the *Rozysk o raskol’nicheskoï brynskoï vere*, Dmitrii writes:

Образ божии не в лице, очесахъ, устнахъ, и браде, и прочихъ членахъ тела зримыхъ, но въ невидимой душе словесной, разумной, самовласной, бессмертной<sup>105</sup>

*The image of God is not in the face, the eyes, the lips, the beard or in the other visible members of the visible body, but in the invisible soul which is verbal, rational, self-governing and immortal.*

Here Dmitrii demarcates what had previously been just one facet of the soul, it’s verbal (*slovesnaia*) element. He suggests that the sanctity of man resides not in the union of ‘visible’ and ‘invisible’, of corporeal and spiritual, but solely in the ‘verbal’ and ‘rational’ soul, as separate from the body. His emphasis on the rationality and dominance of the invisible soul echoes Descartes’ emphasis on the sovereignty of human consciousness over the material world.<sup>106</sup> Dmitrii’s statement seems, if not to negate, then to present an image of body and soul that is more explicitly uncoupled than the one conveyed, for example, in *O chelovechestem*” *estestve*. The earlier text opened with the

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<sup>105</sup> Dmitrii Tuptalo, *Rozysk*, p. 297.

<sup>106</sup> ‘Then, carefully examining what I was, and seeing that I could pretend I had no body, that no outer world existed, and no place where I was; but that despite that I couldn’t pretend that I did not exist...from this I knew that I was a being whose whole essence or nature is confined to thinking and which has no need of a place, nor depends on any material thing, in order to exist. So that is to say that the soul by which I am what I am, is entirely distinct from the body...’ René Descartes, *Discours de la Methode*, Ch. 4.

statement that ‘*v chelovechestem*” *sloze koemuzhdo oudu svoi ustav*” *povelenno est*’ *khraniti, i vsi udive razlichnii sut’ i derzhavni*’ (within the human conglomeration [*slog*] each limb is enjoined to keep its own regulation, and all limbs are different and all are sovereign).<sup>107</sup> In *O chelovechestem*” *estestve*’s envisioning of human nature, then, visible ‘limbs’ and invisible ‘limbs’ are presented as having a symbiotic relationship; wisdom, strength and bravery are produced by the heart, the feet, the spirit and the blood respectively. Dmitrii uses a new form of ‘scientific’ logic to combat the social significance of the beard. In his writing, the realm of the physical, observable body is being gradually separated from the realm of the immortal soul and held subject to different laws. Rather than the beard being primarily a social-moral marker of masculinity, on a level with clothes, the ‘value’ of the beard is associated as much if not more with its use as with social custom.

The examples of Adrian and Dmitrii show that the beard was a symbol of a social identity, one that was under threat from the Petrine reforms and the new worldview they engendered, and underscore that the body could signify numerous and even contradictory things about gender depending on the socio-political-moral context. Just as the debate over beard shaving was a means of negotiating ideas about masculinity, representations of breastfeeding increasingly embodied and expressed contemporary discussions over the role of women and the moral value of feminine caregiving within the family.<sup>108</sup> Between 1676 and 1680, Simeon of Polatsk, court poet to Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich, wrote a poem entitled *Blud so synom sotvorshaia mati* (*A mother’s sexual sin with her son*).<sup>109</sup> This poem was included in Simeon’s poetic collection that he named the *Vertograd mnogotsvetnyi* (*The blossoming garden*). The collection follows in the longstanding medieval tradition of the *florilegia*, an anthology of moral extracts often from the Church

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<sup>107</sup> GIM. Sin. № 921, fol. 124v.

<sup>108</sup> Chapter 3 of this thesis focuses in more detail on the ‘embodiment’ of parental values in seventeenth century poetry, including in the work of Simeon of Polatsk, considering specifically how ideas of caregiving and compassion come to be expressed increasingly through references to the maternal body.

<sup>109</sup> Simeon Polockij, *Vertograd mnogotsvetnyi*, vol. 1, ed. by Anthony Hippius and Lydia I. Sazonova (Cologne, Weimar, Vienna: Bohlau Verlag, 1996), pp. 92-98. Anthony Hippius has identified this as a Slavonic poetic rendition of a Latin text contained in the 1653 Jesuit text *Magnum speculum exemplorum*. This, combined with discussions of breastfeeding found in translated medical texts such as *Kniga o rozhennii mladencheskom* (see p. 47), suggests that the impulse to construct breastfeeding as a signifier of feminine morality might have been influenced by Western traditions. For more on the Western influence on this collection, see A. Hippius., ‘Zapadnoe vliianie na “Vertograd mnogotsvetnyi” Simeona Polotskogo’, in *TODRL*, vol. 52 (Moscow: Pushkinskii Dom, 2001) pp. 695-708.

Fathers, but it also showcases the dialogue between natural philosophy and Orthodox morality in the latter part of the seventeenth century. There are clear conceptual parallels with the emergent genre of the *travnik/lechebnik* (the first translated Muscovite herbal, of course, was entitled *Blagoprokhladnyi tsvetnik vertograd zdравиia* (*The blessedly refreshing florilegium or garden of health*) and one of the most prolific herbals of the seventeenth century was known as the *Prokhladnyi vertograd* (*The refreshing garden*)).

In this poem, Simeon of Polatsk demonstrates his familiarity with the same medical understanding of breastfeeding expressed in *O chelovechestem* "estestve and the *Kniga o rozhenii mladencheskom*": as the provision of not only food but also love between mother and child. Breastfeeding is cast as a physical symbol of nurture and caregiving. Yet the moral value of this caregiving is somewhat ambiguous. The poem frames excessive breastfeeding as the cause of incest between mother and son. The mother, who 'feeds [the child] with her own nipples' (*sama sostsama togo svoioma doiashe*) is 'overcome with an excess of love' (*izlishestvom zhe liubve pobezhdена biashe*) which results in her having sex with her son 'like husband and wife' (*iako muzh s zhenoiu, s neiu sia smesiti*). The poem mobilises the current scientific discourse on breastfeeding, using bodily imagery to support a pre-existing idea in Orthodox religious culture, that maternal love can potentially be 'excessive'. Concern over the appropriateness of the emotional bond between mothers and their children is an Orthodox trope recurring consistently in Byzantine and Muscovite hagiographies featuring mothers.<sup>110</sup> Rather than seeing breastfeeding as crucial to the moral stability of society, the poem reflects an anxiety that breastfeeding might jeopardise the hierarchical bonds it is supposed to underpin and the moral integrity it is supposed to ensure, as the relationship between mother and child threatens to become the relationship between husband and wife.

Dmitrii Tuptalo, writing two decades after Simeon also positions breastfeeding as a symbol of nurture, but firmly frames this as a moral imperative that is integral to the stability of society. At the turn of the eighteenth century, he produced a chronicle of biblical history up until the birth of Christ, known today either as the *Keleinyi letopisets* or sometimes as the *Letopis' mirobytii*. I cite from the eighteenth century edition, which

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<sup>110</sup> In Metropolitan Makarii's *Velikie chet'i minei* excessive or inappropriate love displayed by a mother for her child that rivals the relationship with God is a central theme in the Life of St. Athanasia and her husband Athanasius (Oct 9<sup>th</sup>), Life of Tasia (Nov 13<sup>th</sup>), the Paterik tale 'o staritse' (Dec 31<sup>st</sup>) and the Life of Feodosii (May 3<sup>rd</sup>), among others. See also the Life of Iulianiia Lazarevskaiia, who is praised for not grieving over the death of her children.



was published under the title *Letopis' izhe vo sviatykh ottsa nashego Dimitriia mitropolita Rostovskago chudotvortsia, skazuiushchaia deiania ot nachala mirobytiia do rozhdestva Khristova, sobrannaia iz Bozhestvennago pisaniiia iz razlichnykh khronografov i istoriografov grecheskikh, slavenskikh, rimskikh, pol'skikh evreiskikh i inykh* (*Chronicle of our holy father and miracle-worker Dimitrii Metropolitan of Rostov, narrating the events from the beginning of the world until the birth of Christ, collated from Scripture, from various Greek, Slavonic, Roman, Polish and Jewish chronographs and annals,*

among others, hereafter referred to as *Letopis'*).<sup>111</sup> This constitutes, in essence, an extended exegesis on the Old Testament, containing many moralising episodes on different elements of social life. One element that Bishop Dmitrii focusses on is breastfeeding. Taking his cue from the passage in the Old Testament where Sarah breastfeeds Isaac, he combines familiar reasoning based on scriptural precedent with the moral framework based on 'functionality' that he evokes in the *Rozysk o raskol'niceskoi brynskoii vere*, to argue for the moral necessity of breastfeeding.

Dmitrii refers broadly to the same prevailing medical arguments as Simeon does (that love and morality can be passed from mother to child via breastmilk) but he cites his reliance on medical practitioners directly –*tako estestvoslovtsy izvestvuiut*” ('at least this is what the natural philosophers confirm'). Specifically, he reiterates the explanation found in *O chelovechestem*” *estestve* that breastfeeding ensures love between mother and child (see Table 4, example 1), and also relies upon two key ideas found in the *Kniga o rozhении младенческом*” (a midwifery manual circulating in several copies in the second half of the seventeenth century, see Table 1, example 4). The first of these (Table 4, example 2) is that maternal breastfeeding is healthy for the child physically and that wet-nurses are a less preferable option, and the second (Table 4, example 3) is that breastfeeding has an effect on the child's moral character:

**Table 4. Contemporary medical and midwifery theory referenced in Dmitrii Tuptalo's *Letopis'***

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|-----|---|
| (1) | <p>Да от тела своего любовию кормят младенца родившегося им и тем согнездну любовь имут.<sup>112</sup></p> <p><i>This is so that they can feed the child born to them from their own bodies with love, and in this way have familial love.</i></p> <p><i>(O chelovechestem</i>” <i>estestve</i>, 1630s-1650s)</p> |
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<sup>111</sup> Dmitrii Tuptalo, *Letopis' izhe vo sviatykh ottsa nashego Dimitriia mitropolita Rostovskago chudotvortsia, skazuishchaia deianiia ot nachala mirobytiia do rozhdestva Khristova, sobrannaia iz Bozhestvennago pisaniiia, iz razlichnykh khronografov i istoriografov grecheskikh, slavenskikh, rimskikh, pol'skikh, evreiskikh i inykh*, vol. 1 (Saint Petersburg: Imperatorskaia Akademiia Khudozhestv', 1796).

<sup>112</sup> GIM. Sin. № 921, fols. 127r-128.

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|-----|--|
| (2) | <p>Всего лучит и здоровее дитяти коли прямая мать своимъ из груди молока кормить потому что молоко прямой матери прирощению дитячому потребной потому что пророженное допричь того, что ему ни есть то не столь добро а то потому здорово, что къ нему в животе будучи привыкло имся вскормило. Дай потому знать коли раслачется материным молоком скорее утешится нежели мамыным.<sup>113</sup></p> <p><i>It is best of all and healthiest for the baby when the birth mother feeds [the baby] with her own breastmilk, because the birth mother's milk is needed at the birth of a baby, because the birth contributes [to the milk] something that is not just very good but very healthy for [the baby] and being in the stomach [the baby] became accustomed to being nourished by it. You should also know that a mother's milk calms the child when it is crying quicker than the milk of a wet-nurse.</i></p> <p><b>(Kniga o rozhenii, 1665)</b></p> |
| (3) | <p>Была бы мамка хорошего лица, в плечах силна, а в грудех широка.....и чтоб была во обычаехъ и во нравех добрых, негневлива и не жестока и добре бы страшилва понежь таковыя случающись шкодливы суть и молоко оттого портится и вместо с молокомъ в прирощение и обычай дитяти входять которое дитя съестъ и для того не пригож в мамки принимать и глупых и своевольных<sup>114</sup></p> <p><i>The wet-nurse should have a good face, strong shoulders and large breasts...and she should have good customs and manners, and not be quick to anger, or cruel, and not too fearful, since those [women] are damaging and their milk will spoil from this and together with the milk, that which the child sucks will enter into his nature and habits, and for this reason it is not suitable to take a wet-nurse who is stupid or wilful</i></p> <p><b>(Kniga o rozhenii, 1665)</b></p>  |

These passages place the responsibility for the physical, moral and emotional wellbeing of the infant firmly on the practice of maternal breastfeeding. Not only is it 'healthiest' for the child to be fed from the same body in which it gestated, as it will be accustomed to this food, it is also better for the child's emotional health, since love flows physically through breastmilk as well as food. The emotional bond between mother and child is presented as something inherent, the physical bond between them ensuring the mother's ability to comfort her child better than any other carer.

<sup>113</sup> RNB SPBDA No. 409, fol. 31r.

<sup>114</sup> RNB SPBDA No. 409, fols. 31r-32v.

Bishop Dmitrii takes these ideas and inserts them into his exegesis on the origins of the world. In so doing, he brings contemporary discourse on natural philosophy firmly into the domain of Orthodox morality.

*Доитъ детищъ Сарра. Съ разрешениемъ неплодства Господь Богъ Сарре и млеко чудесне въ персехъ доволно подаде, да сама питаетъ чадо свое. Зде да научатся матери, яко должны суть сами своя младенцы сосцами питати, а не отдавать инемъ женамъ доилицамъ: тую бо имъ должность Богъ и естество наложи, давши имъ сосца, аки некия сосуды полныя, да питають родящихся от нихъ. И не без греха бываетъ темъ матерямъ, яже безъ благословенныя каковы вины вдають своя младенцы доилицамъ, сами не хотяще я питати. Не без греха: ибо оттуду не малыя производять вреды. Во первыхъ то, яко младенецъ питаемый не своея матери млекомъ, но иныя жены, бываетъ не здоровъ, и скоро умираетъ [...] Другии вред (бываетъ) сей, яко младенцы ссущии сосцы доилицъ, со млекомъ и недуги, аще доилица каковыя имать, и обычаи ихъ въ себе приемлють. [...] Третии вредъ, яко отроча чуждымъ, не материнимъ млекомъ воспитанное, въ возрастъ пришедши, не будетъ иметь толикия къ матери своей любви, елико имеютъ воспитанныи млекомъ своя си матери. Мало же любви имущии къ матери дети, малое ей и почитание воздають.*<sup>115</sup>

*“Sarah suckles the infant”. The Lord God undid Sarah’s infertility and miraculously gave her milk in her breasts, so that she could feed her child. Here all mothers should learn that they should breastfeed their children themselves, and not give their children to wet-nurses; for this duty was put into their natures by God when he gave them nipples, like full vessels, so that they might feed their offspring. And it is sinful for mothers to give their children to wet-nurses without some blessed or ordained reason, only because they do not wish to feed them. It is sinful because no small harm comes from it. Firstly, because a child who is fed not by its own mother, but by another woman, will not be healthy, and will die young [...] Another sort of harm that can come from a child suckling the nipples*

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<sup>115</sup> Dmitrii Tuptalo, *Letopis’*, p. 155-156.

*of a wet-nurse is that together with the milk the child consumes any illnesses that the wet-nurse might have and also absorbs her habits. [...] The third sort of harm that can come from a child being fed by anyone other than his mother is that when the child is grown, it will not have so much love for its mother, as those children who are fed by their mother's milk. A lack of love between children and their mother causes them to have a lack of respect for her.*

Dmitrii presents maternal breastfeeding as a moral imperative first and foremost based on scriptural precedent, with reference to the Old Testament passage where Sarah breastfeeds Isaac. Alongside this, however, he presents another epistemological framework for conceiving of the morality of anatomy based on reasoning drawn from natural philosophy: the logic of 'use' and 'harm'. Maternal breastfeeding is constructed as a moral standard in two ways simultaneously; on the one hand, based on the words of Scripture, and on the other, based on a scientific assessment of its 'useful' or 'healthy' function.

The examples of Simeon and Dmitrii and Adrian show that the scientific discourse on beards and breastfeeding circulating in medical texts was known to elite ecclesiastical figures in Muscovy in the second half of the seventeenth century, and that this knowledge was referenced judiciously to suit their own agendas. Simeon and Adrian incorporate scientific understandings of the beard and breastfeeding selectively to fit pre-existing Orthodox ideas about gender, but Dmitrii's writing advances a different framework for assessing the body based on empirical ideas of 'functionality', relying as much on a rational, mechanical conception of the body as he does on Scripture having the power to endow certain bodily practices with sanctity. This framework allows him to diminish the moral significance of the beard, in accordance with Peter I's wishes and as part of his condemnation of Old Belief. The emergence of this reasoning signals a gradual reevaluation of the role of the physical body in the question of sex.

While the beard continues to lose its moral significance into the eighteenth century, breastfeeding is consolidated as a symbol of caregiving and nurture in Muscovite culture, associating these values particularly with women. In the 1717 Petrine etiquette manual *Iunosti chestnoe zertsalo ili pokazanie k zhiteiskomu obkhozhdenniu. Sobranie ot raznykh avtorov* (*The Honourable Mirror of Youth or instruction on manners for life*,

*Collected by different authors*), for example, the virtue of ‘Charity’ is embodied in the allegory of a young girl who breastfeeds her mother in prison to stop her from starving.<sup>116</sup> This allegory takes breastfeeding out of the immediate context of motherhood, suggesting that the associated value of ‘nurture’ should be demonstrated by women not only to their children, but in general. In Chapter Three of this thesis I trace the literary developments that operated in parallel to the spread of scientific knowledge in order to facilitate such maternal imagery.

## 5. Conclusion

Modern conceptions of sex rely on the assumption of a fixed anatomical binary forming the basis on which gender difference is constructed. This chapter has argued that projecting such assumptions into the past is anachronistic and impedes our understanding of the Muscovite body. Analysis of reproductive terminology in a sample of medical sources indicates that there were no words for genitalia or reproductive organs that were stably or consistently gendered. The meanings of words such as *mikhir’*, *utroba*, *chrevo* and *dno* were multiple and simultaneously incorporated understandings of reproduction, excretion, and digestion. These body parts are not associated with discrete functions, but with several biological processes operating in the abdomen simultaneously. This means that they can be at once gendered and non-gendered, depending on the context. Very often, I note, it is not possible to know which meaning is being conveyed. I suggest that while Muscovites were no doubt aware of bodily difference, the presence or absence of reproductive organs is not the primary means by which gender is determined in these texts. Anatomy was not considered to be more real, more fixed, more natural or ‘prior’ to culture when it came to definitions of men and women. Ideas about bodily difference interacted with and were informed by many other forms of cultural knowledge about gender that were constantly in flux.

Developing Laqueur’s contention that sex before the seventeenth century was a ‘sociological, not an ontological state’, these medical sources suggest that rather than

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<sup>116</sup> This image is known as *Caritas Romana* (Roman Charity) in the Western European tradition, where it was a particularly popular representation of charity in Renaissance and Baroque culture. The image traces back to a Roman story known in two versions; one in which the daughter breastfeeds her imprisoned mother, and the other her imprisoned father.

focussing on anatomical essence, or sex as a state of being, it is bodily practices that define the boundaries between male and female bodies in these texts—namely, growing a beard and breastfeeding. Although they play out across the body, these practices differentiate between men and women not primarily on physical principles (since not all men and women engage in these practices), but on social principles. The beard is a social marker of masculine authority and breastfeeding a marker of feminine subservience and responsibility for childrearing. This is different from a gender binary in the modern conception precisely because the underlying principle is social, not biological. If anatomy is a marker of a societal principle—that men have authority over women—rather than what *constitutes* differences between men and women in and of itself, then its role and meaning in definitions of gender is unstable and liable to change as social practices change.

The seventeenth century is a crucial period to consider the construction of sex in Muscovy because it is a period of significant socio-cultural change. Over the course of the century the cultural meaning of bodily difference is under negotiation as ideas about masculinity and femininity shift in response to Western European influence. Breastfeeding and beard shaving do not signify stably in definitions of gender, with representations of these practices across the period oscillating between veneration and condemnation. In the writings of key Muscovite ecclesiastical hierarchs, breastfeeding is consolidated as a gendered symbol while the beard is lost, in conjunction with the evolution of a scientific view of the body as a mechanism executing useful functions.

This chapter has not so much shown what the Muscovites *did* think about sex as it has endeavoured to show the opposite: that it is not possible assume what they thought about sex. It has questioned some of the assumptions that, coming from the modern cultural context, can be easily and unconsciously read into pre-modern sources, with potentially misleading consequences. It has shown that the modern anatomical binary cannot be satisfactorily mapped onto these particular Muscovite sources. This presents no certainty of anything, but it suggests that the Muscovite definition of sex is in need of re-evaluation, as something less fixed and more malleable than we are used to.

This chapter lays the theoretical and historical groundwork for my consideration of the gendered body as represented in Muscovite literature across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the role it plays in constructing ideologies of parenthood.

Having established that biology did not have authority over cultural knowledge in the explication of reproductive difference, the next two chapters explore the crucial role of aesthetic and generic factors in the construction of sex and parenthood.



## CHAPTER II: MOTHER AS ‘FATHER’: PARENTHOOD AS PATRIARCHY IN THE *STEPENNAIA KNIGA*

### 1. Introduction

As established in the previous chapter, Muscovite medical literature was characterised by reproductive ambiguity. Men and women were conceptualised according to a gendered social hierarchy in which men were reliably seen as superior to women, but this hierarchy was not underpinned in any consistent way by references to reproductive body parts or genitalia. In an age before the Enlightenment and the rise of empirical knowledge, anatomy was not privileged over cultural norms as a recourse to understanding and conceptualising reproductive difference. Authority in matters of reproduction was located less in anatomical evidence than in religious or socio-historical precedent. This resulted in a surprising degree of flexibility in both the representation and meaning of the reproductive body in Muscovite cultural production. As a case study, this chapter examines the main sixteenth-century genealogical history of the Muscovite royal family, the *Book of Royal Degrees* (*Stepennaia kniga*, hereafter *SK*).<sup>117</sup> It explores how the parental body is symbolically constructed within the text in order to present a vision of reproduction and parenthood that upholds contemporary dynastic concerns, namely: patrimony and patrilineality.

This chapter addresses the *SK*’s representation of parenthood from two perspectives. Firstly, physical—the delivery of a child—and secondly, social—the rearing of a child. The compendium does not consistently present clear anatomical differences between male and female reproductive bodies, attributing the same reproductive body parts and roles to both sexes. Consequently, it does not envisage parenthood in terms of a dichotomy of motherhood and fatherhood. Rather, political concerns shape parenthood in the *SK*. The text inscribes dynastic, ecclesiastical and social hierarchies into parental bodies, behaviour and emotion. While royal mothers do appear

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<sup>117</sup>All citations will be from the following edition of the work: Gail D. Lenhoff and Nikolai N. Pokrovskii, eds., *Stepennaia kniga tsarskogo rodosloviia po drevneishim spiskam*, [The Book of Degrees of the Royal Genealogy: a Critical Edition Based on the Oldest Known Manuscripts, Volume 1] (Hereafter *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 1, vol. 2), (Moscow: “Languages of Slav Cultures”, 2007).

in the *SK* narrative, they play a subservient, inconsistent and ambiguous role, rendered largely invisible in the practices of birthing and of rearing. It is ‘fathers’, in the guise of Grand Prince and ecclesiastical hierarch, who make the dominant physical and social contribution to the production of dynastic offspring. In order to endow legitimacy to the Muscovite ruling dynasty under Ivan IV and the Orthodox Church under Metropolitan Makarii, the *SK* symbolically envisages the history of dynasty, faith and family in Muscovy as a narrative, singularly, of ‘Fatherhood’ with a capital ‘F’.

The 1500s was a period in Muscovite history of intense political and social change. The transition from a Khanate-style government to an autocratic state with Muscovite hegemony over many former Rus lands began from the second half of the 15th century, under Ivan III. After Ivan’s second marriage in 1472 to Sophia Palaiologina, daughter of Thomas Palaiologus, who claimed the throne of Constantinople as the brother of the last Byzantine emperor Constantine XI, the Muscovite branch of the Riurikid family adopted Byzantine imperial court rituals and emblems. During this period, Muscovite territories expanded enormously, and the beginnings of a centralised state administrative apparatus began to appear, including the creation of a standing army and the issue of the first Muscovite law code in 1497. This administrative system crystallised in the social hierarchy of *mestnichestvo*, a system of precedence which ranked families and determined appointments on the basis of historical nobility. The expansion of territory, the centralisation of autocratic power and the proliferation of bureaucratic apparatus consolidated a top-down hierarchical order in every aspect of political and social life, which was only strengthened in successive generations. By the middle of the century Ivan IV had advanced the imperial ambitions for the dynasty further, as evidenced by his coronation in 1547 as the first Muscovite ‘Tsar’, a title which implied equal status to the Byzantine Emperor or Mongol Khan. Patrimony and patrilineal concerns had moved to the forefront of Muscovite political ideology and were formalised in texts depicting family relations.

The *SK* is a sixteenth-century genealogical history of the Muscovite branch of the Riurikids, the ruling dynasty. It was compiled between the mid-1550s and the early 1560s under Metropolitan Makarii and completed under his successor, Afanasii.<sup>118</sup> The

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<sup>118</sup> Gail Lenhoff, ‘The Construction of Russian History in *Stepennaja Kniga*’, *Revue des études slaves*, 76.1 (2005), p. 31. Lenhoff noted that the watermarks on the two oldest known manuscripts indicate that both were copied on paper produced between 1560 - 1563.

compendium constructs a coherent, unbroken narrative of unilateral succession for the royal family reaching back into the tenth century. It is structured as an extended family tree consisting of seventeen generations of rulers and ecclesiastical patriarchs in seventeen chapters or 'degrees' (*stepeni* or *grani*), culminating in Ivan IV's reign in Moscow (1547-1584).

Gail Lenhoff has drawn attention to the explicit ideological and didactic motives of the *SK*, which set it apart from earlier more straightforwardly documentary chronicles. She has variously described the *SK* as 'the first narrative portraying the tsardom's history as a process with purpose and direction' and as 'the first historical compendium affirming the right of the Muscovite kingdom to the status of the leading Orthodox empire'.<sup>119</sup> The compendium participated simultaneously in two mutually-reinforcing ideological projects; on the one hand, to consolidate autocratic rule under one monarch, and on the other, to establish Moscow as the inheritor of Constantinople and the centre of Orthodox Christianity, thus providing 'a cohesive moral justification of the dynasty's powers'.<sup>120</sup>

The head of the Muscovite Church, Metropolitan Makarii, under whose patronage much of the content of the *SK* was composed, pursued these goals in tandem by establishing a strong symbolic symbiosis of land, dynasty and faith.<sup>121</sup> In the *SK*, three things are key to the consolidation of the ruler's legitimacy: historical legitimacy for rule over certain territories; patrilinear dynastic succession; and spiritual authority, conferred through Orthodoxy. To construct this narrative of land, family and faith in Muscovy the reality of collateral succession, of periods of dynastic strife and territorial disunity, which dominated the geo-political culture of Rus into the fifteenth century, is passed over. Gail Lenhoff notes that 'the book's treatment of genealogy, based on religious metaphors, makes it unsuitable as a genealogical document'.<sup>122</sup> However, despite the *SK*'s historical inaccuracies, it can in fact reveal much about the imagined lineage of rulership and the symbolic value of reproduction and parenthood in sixteenth-century Muscovite elite culture.

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<sup>119</sup> Lenhoff, 'The Construction of Russian History', *Revue des études slaves*, p.31; 'Stepennaia kniga. Zamysel, ideologiya, adresatsiya', in *Stepennaia kniga tsarskogo rodosloviia: po drevneishim spiskam*, vol. 1, ed. by G. D. Lenhoff and N. N. Pokrovskii, (Moscow, 2007), p. 120.

<sup>120</sup> Lenhoff, 'The Construction of Russian History', *Revue des études slaves*, p. 50.

<sup>121</sup> David Miller notes this in 'The Velikie Minei Chetii and Stepennaia Kniga of Metropolitan Makarii and the origins of Russian national consciousness', *Forschungen zur Osteuropäischen Geschichte*, 26 (1979), pp. 263-373.

<sup>122</sup> Lenhoff, 'The Construction of Russian History', *Revue des études slaves*, p. 50.

Each chapter or ‘degree’ within the compendium corresponds to the rule of one Grand Prince, to give the impression of a consistently unbroken chain of succession from father to son (necessitating several omissions). Each degree also opens with a list of the reigning Orthodox Metropolitans of the era, constructing a parallel chain of ecclesiastical succession. As such, the format of the compendium does not provide a clear space for accounts of royal motherhood. Very few mothers are represented with extended narratives of their life; this chapter considers three such mothers. These are Ol’ga of Kyiv, whose hagiography was composed especially for the *SK* and prefaces the seventeen degrees of rulership. She is the first Christian ruler of Rus and the grandmother of its baptismal monarch, Prince Vladimir (10<sup>th</sup> century). I also consider the account of Mariia Shvarnovna, mother of Yaroslav II (12<sup>th</sup> century), which is heavily redacted from earlier chronicle sources, and the account of Evdokiia Donskaia, mother of Vasili I (14<sup>th</sup> century), which is unique to the *SK*.

The first section of this chapter is dedicated to parental bodies. It demonstrates that in the *SK*, reproductive anatomy is dictated by the ideological imperatives of the text. Reproductive capacity is ascribed to the body of the male ruler whereas the body of the royal mother, when mentioned, is presented as chaste. The following section explores the social relationship between parents and children. It demonstrates that, similarly, representations of parental behaviour are dictated by the texts concerns to uphold Muscovite patriarchal culture. Comparative analyses between accounts of Muscovite rulers, royal mothers and ecclesiastical hierarchs show that they all perform the same tropes—teaching, blessing and loving. However, narratives featuring royal mothers diminish connections with their biological children and implicate them in spiritual genealogies of faith and territory. The chapter concludes with an examination of the *SK*’s representation of biological processes that we associate with the maternal body (conception, childbirth). It demonstrates how male ecclesiastical figures repeatedly intercede in the reproductive cycle, assuming the agency of the mother by effecting miraculous conceptions and births. The production of royal heirs is made to signify the union of Church and dynasty. The image of two fathers—secular and ecclesiastic—underpins patriarchal authority in political, social and ecclesiastical culture.

## 2. Fertile men and chaste women in the *SK*

In the *SK*, the reproductive body is not delineated into binary entities: male and female. The parts of the body evoked in the *SK* that are associated with sexual or procreative function are: *chresla* (чресла), *chrevo* (чрево), *utroba* (оутроба) and *nedra* (недра). I do not translate these words, as they do not have a stable signification, as discussed in Chapter I, and do not correspond directly to modern anatomical terminology. Broadly speaking, they refer to the area of the human torso between the bottom of the ribs and the pelvis. These words are non-gender specific and can be applied to both men and women. Among their other meanings, they can refer to ‘the place in the body where children come from’. For example, in the *SK* the word *chrevo* is applied to the royal mother Sophia Palaiologina in Degree XV:

### **Degree XV: Sophia Palaiologina**

...zachatsia vo chreve eia bogodarovannyi naslednik.<sup>123</sup>

...in her *chrevo* a God-given heir was conceived.

This is the typical formula used in reference to the Mother of God, both in the *SK* and more broadly in the Gospel: “*blazhenoe chrevo, nosh'shee tia*” (the blessed *chrevo* which carried you) (Luke.11:27). *Chrevo* is also used with reference to men on numerous occasions in the *SK*, usually as part of a recurring Biblical formulation that features in the context of royal fathers addressing their heirs, as in the following examples:

### **Degree VII: Yaroslav Vsevolodich**

О возлюблении мои сынове, плодъ чрева моего<sup>124</sup>

*O my beloved sons, the fruit of my chrevo*

### **Degree XII: Dmitrii Donskoi**

Вы же убо, сынове мои и плодъ чрева моего<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 2, p. 250.

<sup>124</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 1, p. 488.

<sup>125</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 2, p. 59.

*So you are my sons and the fruit of my chrevo*

**Degree XVI: Vasili III**

...желаше бо по премногу отъ плода чрева его посадити на престолѣ  
своемъ<sup>126</sup>

*For he greatly wished to place the fruit of his chrevo on his throne*

As the cited examples illustrate, the *SK* attributes the *chrevo*, the bodily site of the production of offspring, to both men and women. An examination of the context in which these words are applied to mothers and fathers, however, along with the other ways in which paternal and maternal bodies are described, reveals ideological differences in the conception of the contribution of mother and of father to the procreative process.

While the *SK* frequently expresses the fertility of male rulers through references to reproductive organs, the royal mother is disembodied and de-sexualised. Prince Vladimir's identity as the father of a Christian dynasty, for instance, is expressed through an image of his descendants issuing directly from his *chresla*:

...такоже и процвѣтшии иже от чреслъ его многорасленный плодъ  
благословенный в род и род непреложнии исполнители бяху всему закону  
христианскому<sup>127</sup>

*... And the multibranched offspring of blessed lineage, a lineage of immutable  
executors of all Christian law, blossomed from his chresla*

This extract is a reference to Genesis 35:11, in which God says to Jacob that many nations shall issue from his loins. It also recalls Psalms 131:11 in which God promises David the gift of progeny. The *SK*'s reliance on biblical citations demonstrates the compilers' desire to emphasise the God-ordained dynastic lineage of the Muscovite rulers. This strategy recurs in accounts of several princes, as in the case of Vasili III who refers to himself

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<sup>126</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 2, p. 315.

<sup>127</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 1, p. 230.

and his predecessors as issuing from the *chresla* of his ancestor Ivan Daniilovich in Degree XVI.

Despite the fact that dynastic women also presumably possess *chresla*, this particular word is never used in association with royal mothers in the *SK*. It is even actively written out of the compendium in the case of Princess of Mariia Shvarnovna, wife of Grand Prince Vsevolod III and mother of Yaroslav II (Degree VI, twelfth century). The account of Mariia as it appears in the *SK* is redacted from the *Patriarshii spisok* of the *Nikonovskaia letopis'*, an earlier sixteenth-century comprehensive chronicle of Muscovite history. The original chronicle is thought to have been compiled under Metropolitan Daniil and covered events up to 1520. Its main sources are the *Ioasafovskaia letopis'* (1520s-30s), the Novgorod *Khronograficheskaia letopis'* (end of the fifteenth century) and the *Simeonovskaia letopis'* (end of the fifteenth century), in which we also find an account of Mariia.<sup>128</sup> In the second half of the 1550s, the *Nikonovskaia letopis'* was updated, incorporating material from the *Voskresenskaia letopis'* and the *Letopis' nachala tsarstva* (1556). This redaction of the *Nikonovskaia letopis'*, which is known as the *Patriarshii spisok*, became one of the main sources of the *SK*. A comparison between the accounts found in the *Patriarshii spisok* and the *SK* with their fifteenth-century predecessor in the *Simeonovskaia letopis'*, which covers events from 1177-1493, reveals concern to remove imagery that alludes to Mariia's reproductive body, as can be seen in the successive redactions of the following passage where Mariia is giving a deathbed sermon to her sons:

***Simeonovskaia letopis'* (15th century)**

...имеи братью свою, аки сыны, занеже ты первыи сынъ мой еси, ты изшедъ  
ис чреслъ моихъ<sup>129</sup>

...*treat your brothers as sons, for you are my first son - you issued from my chresla*

***Nikonovskaia letopis'* (late 1550s)**

...имеи братию свою аки сыны, и милуй ихъ аки рождение свое<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> B. M. Kloss, *Nikonovskii svod i russkie letopisi XVI-XVII vekov* (Moscow: 1980), pp. 25-43.

<sup>129</sup> *Simeonovskaia letopis'*, ed. by A. E. Presniakov, in *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei* (hereafter *PSRL*) vol.18 (Saint Petersburg: Imperatorskaia arkheograficheskaia komissia, 1913), p. 40.

<sup>130</sup> *Letopisnyi sbornik, imenuemyi Patriarsheiu ili Nikonovskoiu letopis'iu*, ed. by A. F. Bychkov, in *PSRL*, vol. 10 (Saint Petersburg: Arkheograficheskaia komissia, 1885), pp. 63-64.

*...treat your brothers as sons, and have mercy on them as you would your own offspring*

**SK (1560s)**

...имеи братию свою яко сынове и милуи ихъ яко свои удѣ<sup>131</sup>

*...treat your brothers as sons, and have mercy on them as you would your own limb(s)/ extensions/offspring*

In the *Simeonovskaia letopis*’, the justification for brotherly respect issues first from the *chresla* of the mother. However, the locus of birth is disconnected from the body of the mother in the successive redactions of this sentence. In the *Nikonovskaia letopis*’, reference to maternal *chresla* is removed. The young prince is encouraged to refer not to his relationship with his mother for justification for his behaviour, but to envisage himself as the father figure and cast his relationship with his brothers in the context of his own paternal authority. In the *SK*, any reference to parent-child relationships is removed altogether, and the prince finds the justification for his behaviour mapped onto his own body. First maternal and then paternal references are replaced with a self-referential allusion to the body of the Grand Prince.

The description of parental bodies changes in line with the political imperatives of the text. The conferral of *chresla* or *chrevo* to Muscovite princes, emulating Biblical examples, is indicative of the legitimacy of the ruler’s lineage. Their removal in the case of Mariia precludes the granting of genealogical legitimacy through the maternal body, and by extension, indicates that she does not possess the necessary authority to grant rulership of her son over his brothers. Genealogical legitimacy and, resultantly, the authority of rulership are inscribed in the male body through the Biblical valence of the anatomical attributes of *chresla* and *chrevo*. The omission of the royal mother’s reproductive agency underscores her subservience to the Muscovite Grand Prince and her insignificance with regard to genealogical lineage.

In her study of honour in Muscovy, Nancy Kollmann considers the ideological importance of the female body in cultural concepts of honour. Highlighting the fact that slurs to women’s honour carried a higher penalty than those to men’s honour, she

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<sup>131</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 1, p. 458.



emphasises the link between women's honour, female sexuality and social stability, demonstrating that patriarchal authority is in essence upheld by female chastity.<sup>132</sup> Royal mothers in the *SK* are frequently associated with chastity and abstinence; the desexualisation of the maternal figures consolidates the authority of the male rulers.

Juxtaposing the *SK*'s introductory descriptions of Princess Ol'ga (Preface) and Prince Vladimir (Degree I) supports this conclusion. Both Ol'ga and Vladimir ruled Kyiv in the tenth century.<sup>133</sup> Both royal figures are referred to as the 'vessels' (*sosud*) of God. However, while Vladimir is simply referred to as the "chosen vessel" (*izbrannyi sosud*) without any qualifying adjectives, in the case of Ol'ga her body is emphasised as being "weak" (*nemoshen' biashe sosud, nemoshneish[ii] sosud zhenskago sostava*). Other than weak, the text emphasises that "God chose his vessel as one who is widowed and chaste" (*Ego zhe sosuda izbra Gospod' vdovstvena i tselomudrena*) and describes her as a "divinely-chosen vessel of chastity" (*bogoizbrannyi sosude tselomudriia*).<sup>134</sup> So, although the text does not specifically declare her virginity, it emphasises her widowhood and her chastity, a combination which, according to an Orthodox culture that does not condone sex outside of marriage, can only point to an absence of sexual activity. Ol'ga's reproductive capacity is only ever allegorically expressed, inferred through references to her as a garden 'ripe, multiplied through piety.... graced with many leaves ... [by which we are] fed by the most-sweet taste of God's reason'.<sup>135</sup>

The *SK* backdates Ol'ga's dedication to chastity to her life even before her conversion to Christianity, suggesting that it is an innate quality that she possesses rather than a learnt behaviour. The text inserts an entire episode, not known in earlier sources,

<sup>132</sup> Nancy Shields Kollmann, *By Honor Bound*, pp. 37-40.

<sup>133</sup> Ol'ga took on the role of regent after the death of her husband Igor in 945 before the ascension of her son Sviatoslav to the throne of Kyiv in 960.

<sup>134</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 1, pp. 150, 183. *Tselomudrie* is a calque of the Greek *sophrosyne*, a virtue associated with temperance, moderation and self-control. Nick Mayhew writes that *tselomudrie* should be understood as a spiritual or psychological state which stands in opposition to the state of lust, or "the intellectual equilibrium of carnal and spiritual concerns to the victory of the latter". This state is achieved through intellectual proximity to God, obtained through abstinence. Mayhew argues that *tselomudrie* is not equated with virginity in Muscovite writing. He cites the sixteenth-century Metropolitan Daniil, who suggests that the physical state of virginity does not automatically ensure the internal state of *tselomudrie* for celibate monks. Daniil's writing implies that *tselomudrie* can be attained without being a virgin, through engaging instead in continent and morally acceptable sexual practice (within marriage). Mayhew, 'Banning 'Spiritual Brotherhoods'', *Palaeoslavica*, 25:2 (September 2017), 93-95. I translate this word as 'chastity' here, to encompass the sense of 'restrained and morally acceptable sexual conduct', as opposed to total abstinence. It should be made clear that the *SK* is not necessarily inferring that Olga is celibate, but that she is sexually pure.

<sup>135</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 1, p. 150.

which relates her chastity even in the face of her future husband Igor's attempts to seduce her before marriage.<sup>136</sup> For Vladimir, however, who is celebrated as the baptiser of Rus, an insistence upon chastity is not vital to the construction of his sanctity. In fact, contrary to the example of Ol'ga, the hagiographer recognises that Vladimir lived in sin before his baptism, and simply advises worshippers to strive instead to mirror the prince's behaviour after conversion:

...И не зрим никтоже на первое нечестие и злострастное ко греху Владимирово рачение, но последними его иже к Богу и человекомъ благочестивыми делы уцеломудримся.<sup>137</sup>

*...and to achieve chastity, no one should look at Vladimir's earlier ungodliness and wickedness of sin, but to his later self, who [turned] to God and became a pious man*

The pattern of fertile fathers and chaste mothers continues throughout the SK compendium. In Degree XII, for example, royal father Dmitrii Donskoi, in a lengthy deathbed sermon to his sons, identifies them as "the fruit of his *chrevo*" (*plod*" *chreva moego*). By contrast, his wife, royal mother Evdokiia Donskaia, in the one episode in which she is depicted with her sons is required to prove her chastity to them to quash rumours of her infidelity. Evdokiia reveals her *utroba*, that is ravaged by fasting and self-deprivation:

...и показа имъ малу часть телеси утробы своя. И видеша отъ зельнаго воздержания и отъ великаго трудолюбия, яко отъ огня ожжене быти плоти ея, и почернети и къ костемъ прилпене<sup>138</sup>

*...and she showed them a small part of the flesh of her utroba. And they saw that as a result of abstinence and extreme hard work her flesh looked as if it had been burned by fire; it was blackened and clinging to the bone*

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<sup>136</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 1, p. 152.

<sup>137</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 1, p. 230.

<sup>138</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 2, p. 68.

The evidence of the *SK* shows that both men and women have the *chrevo*, *utroba* and *chresla*—the parts of the body involved in the production of offspring. However, there is a gendered hierarchy at play, one aligned with the imperative to instil procreative authority and genealogical legitimacy into the patriarchal line. When attributed to Grand Prince Dmitrii Donskoi or Vladimir, the *chrevo* and *chresla* signify fertility and procreation. In the case of the royal mothers, references to these organs is either removed or they are invoked to signify chastity and sexual abstinence. The fact that the singular episode in which Princess Evdokiia interacts with her children emphasises her sexual continence would suggest that it is the royal mother's association with *tselomudrie*; spiritual capital and sexual purity, rather than her involvement in the birth and upbringing of royal children that is of particular importance to the *SK*.

The ambiguous influence of the mother upon the dynastic line also manifests itself in the very structure of the *SK* compendium. The version of the 'Life of Ol'ga' that appears in the *SK* was composed specially for the *SK* and occupies a privileged position as the preface. It was adapted and extended dramatically from pre-existing versions of Ol'ga's life in liturgical books and in the main hagiographical compendium of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the *Velikie chet'i minei*. Ol'ga, as the first Christian monarch of Rus and grandmother to its baptismal monarch, may be understood to represent the biological and spiritual origin of the current Riurikid Muscovite dynasty. However, the inclusion of her hagiography as a preface makes it evident that Ol'ga is not part of the succession of degrees. Only male heirs are included within the 'degrees' of rulership, which start officially with the reign of her grandson Vladimir (Degree I). As such, Ol'ga stands outside the outlined degrees of rulership and occupies a position in genealogical limbo.

In the remainder of the *SK* compendium, royal mothers are never named in the titles of the degrees, unlike Grand Princes and Metropolitans. In the majority of cases, royal mothers are also not described as having a social relationship with their children whatsoever. Their names are allotted no more than short mentions on the occasion of marriage, the birth of an heir, or their deaths. Accounts of dynastic royal mothers that do appear occupy narrative positions far removed from accounts of the births of heirs, which tend to feature at the opening of each degree. The account of Evdokiia Donskaia, for instance, occupies a liminal position at the interstices of Degrees XII and XIII; the five

chapters that constitute her narrative are positioned after the death of Grand Prince Dmitrii Donskoi, forming the conclusion to Degree XII before the reign of her son Vasiliï Dmitrievich opens Degree XIII. With the exception of the single episode in which she speaks with her sons, discussed above, the remaining four chapters feature Evdokiia's contributions to sanctifying and protecting the new dynastic capital: Moscow. The focus of her narrative would indicate that rather than being celebrated for her procreative role, Evdokiia legitimises the dynasty through her sanctification of territory.<sup>139</sup> Similarly, Mariia Vsevolozha's account features at number ten of nineteen chapters in Degree VI, one in a series of chapters that document the foundation of the town of Vladimir. The title of her narrative: 'Of the noble patience of the Grand Princess Mariia Vsevolozha and of her monastery' (*O blagorodnom" tr"penii velikia kniagini Marii Vsevolozhi i o monastyri eia*) emphasises two events: the foundation of a monastery and her death.<sup>140</sup> Both of these events mirror the events of the chapters immediately preceding and following, namely, respectively, her husband Grand Prince Vsevolod founding churches in Vladimir and then his death. The format of the Degree indicates that the value of Mariia's narrative lies in her contribution to the spiritual legacy of the dynasty and the construction of the spiritual landscape of Vladimir, rather than directly through procreation. In fact, as I shall discuss further in section 3, the narrative only documents Mariia's relationship with one of her sons, Konstantin, who does not inherit the throne in Vladimir but is instead later punished for his disobedience to his father. The focus on this particular connection, rather than Mariia's relationship with Vsevolod's heir, Yaroslav, suggests that the mother-son relationship is not endowed with particular symbolic importance for dynastic legitimacy in the *SK*.

### 3. 'Fathering' in accounts of royal mothers in the *SK*

In the *SK*, the descriptions of behaviour in mother-child relationships do not differ from those between father and child. Both mothers and fathers subscribe to a model of

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<sup>139</sup> For further analysis of how the symbolic value of royal women in the *SK* is tied to holy loci and the progressive consolidation of territory, see Rosie Finlinson, 'Bricks to Bones: Royal Women and the Construction of Holy Place in the *Stepennaia kniga*', in "*Set Me as a Seal upon Thy Heart.*" *Constructions of Female Sanctity in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Andrea-Bianka Znorovszky, (Budapest: Trivent Publishing, 2018), pp. 5-26.

<sup>140</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 1, pp. 456-8.

parenthood that mirrors the relationship ecclesiastical hierarchs perform with their flock. This is characterised by giving instruction or edificatory sermons, giving blessing and having ‘love for children’ (*chadoliubie*, *liubochadie*). However, although there is no difference envisioned between the behaviour of mother and father as regards the tropes they perform, there are gendered differences in the extent to which these tropes are granted narrative attention and the extent to which they are performed effectively. In other words, mother and father are separated in their behaviour less by difference than by degree; the relationship between royal mothers and their children is either downplayed or absent, whereas the Grand Princes’ relationship with their children is foregrounded.

In a similar way to the *SK*’s representation of parental bodies, the parent-child relationship is made visible in the narrative in accordance with the aims of constructing patriarchal legitimacy. The preoccupation with the construction of ecclesiastical and princely authority in the *SK* means that mothers do not consistently, and can never satisfactorily, perform the role of ‘Father’. Only in ‘exceptional’ cases do celebrated mothers, recognised for their socio-historical significance, come close to achieving ‘patriarchal’ behaviour. The following two case studies of ‘exceptional’ mothers—Ol’ga of Kyiv and Mariia Shvarnovna—explore how when these mothers enact the behaviours associated with ‘Fatherhood’, the *SK* employs narrative strategies to accentuate their symbolic contribution to dynastic legitimacy—their participation in spiritual genealogies and emblematic role in territorial expansion—and to downplay the authority these women exert over their biological children.<sup>141</sup>

### 3.1 Ol’ga of Kyiv

Ol’ga is undoubtedly an ‘exceptional’ mother. After her husband, Prince Igor’s murder (d. 945) she takes on the role of regent for her son Sviatoslav. The *SK* imagines this transition to rulership as a transition from femininity to masculinity:

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<sup>141</sup> Ol’ga, as noted in the previous section, is primarily celebrated for her role in Christianising Rus in the capacity of its first baptised monarch. She assumes the role of regent after the death of her husband, Igor, and thus acts as the sole parent to her son Sviatoslav. Mariia is celebrated for founding a monastery in which future generations of dynastic monarchs are buried. She performs a deathbed testament to her son Konstantin.

И едва плачю преставшу, по малу нача укреплятися, и женскую немощь забывши и мужеским смыслом обложися и умышляше, како месть крови мужа своего сотворити и коим образом убийца оны казнити <sup>142</sup>

*And hardly had she finished crying, when she started to gather her strength, forgetting her female weakness and arming herself with manly wit, and began to think how she should revenge her husband's death and how she should punish the murderer*

Here, the hagiographer binds masculinity and rulership together. The hagiographer implicitly suggests that Ol'ga is only able to perform her subsequent actions as ruler, including parenting her son Sviatoslav, because she has entered this 'masculine' state.

In her interactions with Sviatoslav, Ol'ga mirrors the behaviour of the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople in his interactions with her on the occasion of her visit to the Byzantine capital in 955. The Patriarch provides Ol'ga with instruction and teaching on the Christian faith, Ol'ga thanks him for admitting her into the ranks of his 'children' (*v chinu chad'' naslednitsu iavil'' est'*) and requests that he, upon her departure from Constantinople, not to deprive her of his parental love or his good teaching:

Се ныне, великий патриарше, разлучаюся твоего любочадия и доброучительства<sup>143</sup>

*Today, great Patriarch, I am being severed from the love you show your children and your good instruction.*

According to the *SK*, on her return Ol'ga displays both 'love' and 'good instruction' to her son Sviatoslav as she attempts to convert him to Christianity. In two chapters, entitled 'The Teaching of Blessed Ol'ga' (*Pouchenie blazhenyia Ol'gi*) and 'The Conversation of Blessed Ol'ga with her son' (*Besedovanie k' synu blazhenyia Ol'gi*), Ol'ga repeatedly instructs Sviatoslav on the value of Christianity and the need for conversion.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 1, p. 154.

<sup>143</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 1, p. 165.

<sup>144</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 1, pp. 169-171.

Ultimately, Ol'ga's parental authority is undermined when Sviatoslav fails to heed her advice:

Боголюбивая же и чадолюбивая Ольга жестость души его виде и безумныя ответы слышав, но любочадия утробю матерьски болезнуя о нем <sup>145</sup>

*God-loving and child-loving Ol'ga, saw the hardness of his soul and heard the foolishness of his answers, but with a mother's child-loving utroba was pained for him*

It is at this moment of failure to convert Sviatoslav that Ol'ga is named explicitly as a mother. Moreover, this collapse of parental authority is associated with a specific form of bodily experience—pain or suffering on behalf of one's child. Nowhere else in the *SK* is parental love associated with suffering and the notion of suffering for one's child is not developed further in the Life of Ol'ga. Rather, Ol'ga's failure to convert Sviatoslav sits uneasily alongside her identity as a spiritual parent of Rus. Ultimately, her love and dedication to God obfuscates her parental role, and Ol'ga assumes a role equal to the apostles in carrying out God's work:

Сице и блаженная Ольга славу царствия и богатство и единого сына остави, Христа любящи и ищущи в чужестранствие устремися и Царствующий град достиже...<sup>146</sup>

*And this blessed Ol'ga left the glory of her kingdom and her riches and her only son, and loving and seeking Christ rushed to foreign lands, reaching the city of Constantinople...*

The *SK* is concerned to accentuate Ol'ga's connection to holy places and her participation in spiritual genealogies. In the story of her childhood, genealogical bloodlines take second place to towns and territories that make their way into the dynastic

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<sup>145</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 1, p. 171.

<sup>146</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 1, p. 177.

family tree. Ol'ga's parental origins are obscure; the text stresses that Ol'ga issued 'not from a princely nor a noble family, but from simple folk' (*ot" roda zhe ne kniazh'ska, ni vel'mozheska, no ot" prostykh liudei*).<sup>147</sup> In direct contrast, the hagiography of Vladimir dedicates an entire section to tracing the Prince's complex and detailed lineage extending back to Emperor Augustus.<sup>148</sup> Ol'ga and Vladimir are in many ways paired as symbolic parental figures to the Riurikid dynasty; both are credited with bringing about the baptism of Rus' in 988. In the *SK*, Vladimir's ancestry is important, whereas for Ol'ga it is not. Her ancestry is of less concern than her issue from the lands of Pskov:

Блажен еси и преблажен Богом препрославленный граде Пскове, яко  
всесильный Богъ отъ страны твоея произведе и породи нам таковой чюдный  
плод благоцветущий, блаженную Олгу.<sup>149</sup>

*Blessed and most-blessed is the most-glorified town of Pskov, from which lands  
God Almighty brought forth and bore to us such a miraculously flowering fruit as  
blessed Ol'ga.*

Rather than being born of a female body, it is the lands of Pskov that give birth to Olga via divine intervention. Ol'ga does not bring legitimacy to the Riurikid dynasty through her bloodline, but through her association with a great Rus centre. In fact, this origin story constitutes a claim to territory, providing both historical and spiritual support to the Muscovite assertion of control over Pskov, a semi-autonomous republic which had fallen under Muscovite dominion not long before the *SK* was written, in 1510.<sup>150</sup>

The final encomium to Ol'ga included in her *SK* hagiography frames her not as a biological parent to the dynasty, but as a spiritual parent to Rus through baptism. She is aligned with the Mother of God in her allegorical role as the virginal Church, rather than as mother of Christ. The cited passage frames Ol'ga as responsible for the allegorical

<sup>147</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 1, p. 150.

<sup>148</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 1, pp. 221-222.

<sup>149</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 1, p. 150.

<sup>150</sup> These events are described in the sixteenth-century Muscovite literary monument, the *Povest' o Pskovskom vziatii*, of which several versions survive, each presenting a slightly different take on the episode.



‘birth’ of Rus through holy baptism; the role of the maternal *utroba* is displaced onto the baptismal font.

...отъ жены неискусомужныя Приснодевы Мариа, Ею же раиская порода отверзеся намъ....Тако и ныне в нашей Рустей земли женою первые обновихомся во благочестие... великая княгини Ольга, ея же память любовию празднующе вернии сынове рустии, людие Божии, языкъ святъ, богатое сriskание, ликъ православныхъ, сынове бани, чада благодати”<sup>151</sup>

...through a woman who knew not a man, the most-virginal Mary, by her the heavenly lineage was made accessible to us....So today in our Rus land we were first restored in our devotion by a woman...the great Princess Ol’ga, whose memory we celebrate with love, we the faithful sons of Rus, God’s people, a holy nation, a powerful movement, an Orthodox community, sons of the baptismal font, blessed children.

The text states that it was Christ’s virgin birth through Mary that made paradise accessible to the faithful and draws a clear parallel with the ‘renewal of piety’ in the lands of Rus’ under Ol’ga. The process of ‘renewal’ makes possible the creation of ‘sons of the baptismal font’, the ‘children of grace’ and the ‘Rus sons of the true faith.’ The use of filial imagery insinuates the veneration of Ol’ga as a parent. Yet, the text does not attribute birth to the female body explicitly, nor name Ol’ga as a mother. Her participation in a god-ordained dynastic lineage is not indicated by the attribution of *chresla*, *utroba* or *chrevo* to her body as in the case of the male Riurikid rulers. The sons of Rus are not the fruit of her body, but issue instead from the baptismal font. As such, birth becomes an ecclesiastical miracle.

Rather than developing a binary construction of mother and father as a parental unit, the *SK*’s reproductive order is based on Riurikid dynastic imperatives: establishing unilateral succession from father to son, instituting spiritual authority and claiming territory. The *SK* associates the birth of the bloodline with Vladimir’s body, and bypasses Ol’ga’s body, associating her with the spiritual birth of Rus, i.e., the beginnings of

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<sup>151</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 1, pp. 182-3.

Christianity and the Church. The impetus to establish a narrative of unilateral patrilineal succession results in the tendency to mask the reproductive agency of the royal mother in the conception of the heir to the Muscovite throne. Female reproductive agency is projected onto landscape and the annexation of territorial holdings. The text recasts Ol'ga's contribution to Riurikid genealogy as a symbolic narrative of the birth of territory and of the Church in Rus.

### 3.2 Mariia Shvarnovna

Over the course of several hundred years of Rus and Muscovite chronicle production Mariia Shvarnovna's story was re-written numerous times, each new generation of chroniclers placing emphasis on aspects most pertinent to their context. The *SK*, naturally, is no exception. The account of Mariia Shvarnovna and her relationship with her sons that appears in Degree VI is a substantially revised edition of previous redactions of the text and reveals the *SK*'s concerns and preoccupations as regards the presentation of procreation and parenthood.

Mariia Shvarnovna (approx. 1158 -1205/6) was the wife of Vsevolod 'of the Big Nest', Grand Prince of Vladimir. In brief, the account 'Of the noble patience of the Grand Princess Mariia Vsevolozha and of her monastery' describes how Mariia, having been ill for seven years, shortly before death is tonsured in the monastery which she herself founded, and at this time calls her sons to her in order to bless them and instruct them on their conduct.

The early accounts of Mariia, which appear for example in the Laurentian codex of the Vladimir-Suzdal chronicle, do not construct her as a mother, but mention only the foundation of the monastery, her illness, entry into the monastery, death, and ceremonial burial.<sup>152</sup> By the 15<sup>th</sup> century, however, the *Simeonovskaia letopis'* presents an extended deathbed instruction to her sons and a lengthy lament by her son after her death.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> *Suzdal'skaia letopis' po Lavrent'evskomu spisku*, ed. by E. F. Karskii, in *PSRL*, vol. 1 (2) (Leningrad: Izdatel'stvo akademii nauk SSSR, 1927), cols. 424-425.

<sup>153</sup> For the account of Mariia as found in the *Simeonovskaia letopis'*, see *Simeonovskaia letopis'*, ed. by Presniakov, in *PSRL*, vol. 18, pp. 40-41. On the history of the chronicle itself, see: Ia. S. Lur'e, *Slovar' knizhnikov i knizhnosti drevnei Rusi. XIV-XVI v. Part 2. L - Ia.* (Leningrad: 1989), pp. 56-57.

In the sixteenth-century *SK* and its source text, the *Patriarshii spisok* of the *Nikonovskaia letopis'*, the *Simeonovskaia letopis'* is edited and the emphasis on the mother-son relationship substantially downplayed. The *SK* alters particular narrative episodes in which Mariia enacts the three hallmarks of parental behaviour: instruction, blessing, and love of children. Instead, the *SK* rearranges the structure of the narrative to place the emphasis on Mariia's role as founder of a monastery. These alterations in Mariia's narrative emphasise male dynastic figures as the locus of dynastic legitimacy and remove references to matriarchal lineages.

The first altered episode I shall focus on is Mariia's instruction (*pouchenie*) to her sons. The parental *pouchenie* is one of the most common modes of parent-child interaction in the *SK*, and the basic format follows a standard structure, including a recurrent set of rhetorical tropes. A juxtaposition of Mariia's instruction with that of Dmitrii Donskoi from Degree XII reveals both these structural and rhetorical parallels, but also highlights key gendered differences.

#### **Mariia Shvarnovna, Degree XVI:**

...И сыны своя призывая къ себе и наказуя ихъ, глаголаше: «Возлюбленная моя чада! Се азъ, яко видите мя, вельми болезнующа...И вы убо, донъдеже пребудете въ суетнемъ семъ житии, первые же имейте веру и любовь къ Богу и Пречистей Его Богоматере, истинней Богородицы, и подщитесь страхъ Божий име въ себе...Сами же межю собою имейте нелицемерную любовь, и Богъ мира и любви будетъ въ васъ и сохранить васъ отъ всякаго зла и покорить враги ваша под нозе ваши...Тем же пребывайте мирно и любовно межю собою, брат брата своего послушающе. Старейшаго же вашего брата Коньстантина имейте яко отца и главу. Ты же, старейшии сыне мои Коньстянтине, имей братию свою яко сынове, и милуй ихъ яко свои удъ.<sup>154</sup>

...And she called her sons to her and taught them, saying: "My beloved children! It is me, as you see, now extremely ill...And, during this vain, earthly life, you should first and foremost have faith in and love for God and his Most-Pure

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<sup>154</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 1, pp. 457 - 8.

*Mother, the true Mother of God, and you should cultivate the fear of God in yourselves...You should have sincere love for one another, and [our] God of peace and love will be within you and will save you from evil and will subdue your enemies beneath your feet...Live in peace and love among yourselves, and listen to your brothers. Consider your eldest brother Konstantin as your father and leader. And you, my eldest son Konstantin, treat your brothers as your sons, and have mercy on them as you would your own limb(s)/offspring.*

**Dmitrii Donskoi, Degree XII:<sup>155</sup>**

...И призва к себе боголюбивую и благонравную свою великую княгиню и благородныя сыны своя и рече «Послушайте мене вси! Се азъ отхожу къ Господу Богу моему... Вы же убо, сынове мои и плодъ чрева моего, Бого боитесь...Миръ и любовь имейте межи собою...и врази ваши падутъ подъ ногами вашими...Призвав же первее большаго сына своего князя Василиа, и старейшиньства путь поручи ему и великое княжение предасть в руце его, еже есть на столование отца его и деда и прадеда, со всеми пошлинами дарова ему отечество свое Русьскую землю. »<sup>156</sup>

*...And he called his God-loving and virtuous Grand Princess to him, along with his noble sons and said: "Listen to me, all of you! I am now leaving you and going to my Lord God....be according to God's commandments always obedient and humble, and hold the fear of God in your hearts all the days of your life...You, my sons and the fruit of my chrevo, have fear of God....let there always be peace and love between you....and your enemies will fall beneath your feet...He called his firstborn and eldest son Prince Vasilii to him, and bestowed seniority upon him and granted the Grand Princely throne, the throne of his father and his grandfather and his great-grandfather, and gave to him the Russian land with all its levies."*

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<sup>155</sup> This instruction by Dmitrii Donskoi is not unique to the *SK* but is a shortened but quite faithful reproduction of the prince's instruction dating from his death in 1389 and is cited here almost verbatim from the *Voskresenskaia letopis'*, another of the largest chronicles of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>156</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 2, pp. 59 - 60.

Both these *poucheniia* mirror each other in several ways. For example, both Mariia and Dmitrii make general pleas for obedience, for their sons to love God, to ‘keep love and peace between them’ and declare that if they follow this teaching, ‘their enemies will fall under their feet’ (Leviticus 26:8).

There are also two key differentiating factors between these speeches. The first is the performative effect they have. Although both Mariia and Dmitrii grant authority to their first-born sons over the other children, Dmitrii’s *pouchenie* constitutes a performative and legitimising act of succession; the transference of dynastic power from one generation to the next, whereas Mariia’s does not. The inheritance that Dmitrii promises is tangible patrimony—rulership of Muscovy, ‘the throne of his father and his grandfather and his great grandfather’ and receipt of its levies, as well as the title of Grand Prince—whilst the inheritance that Mariia grants is purely rhetorical, highlighted by the fact that ultimately, Konstantin does not inherit the throne of his father in Vladimir. In this regard, the *SK*’s treatment of Konstantin’s relationship with his father Vsevolod has bearing. In the Laurentian codex of the Vladimir-Suzdal chronicle, Konstantin is consistently and on occasion at length described as a son who is obedient to his father, and no disagreement between them is mentioned.<sup>157</sup> The *Simeonovskaia letopis’* follows the Laurentian codex in this regard.<sup>158</sup> In the *Nikonovskaia letopis’* however, Konstantin’s direct insubordination to his father is underscored as the reason why his younger brother Iurii Vsevolodovich is given his father’s seat in Vladimir, and Konstantin remains prince of Rostov.<sup>159</sup> In the *SK*, Konstantin’s disobedience takes on further significance. All three chronicle mention a fire that burns Rostov shortly before Vsevolod’s death. In the Laurentian codex and *Nikonovskaia Letopis’*, this is interpreted in a general fashion as heavenly punishment for unspecified sins, but in the *SK*, it is cast specifically as retribution for Konstantin’s refusal to carry out his father’s wishes.<sup>160</sup> The emphasis placed on Konstantin’s insubordination in the *SK* could be explained by the ideological imperative to explain why the process of patrilineal succession from father to firstborn

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<sup>157</sup> For a lengthy description of Konstantin’s filial obedience, see for example: *Suzdal’skaia letopis’ po Lavrent’evskomu spisku*, in *PSRL*, vol. 1 (2), col. 430.

<sup>158</sup> *Simeonovskaia letopis’*, in *PSRL*, vol. 18, p. 44.

<sup>159</sup> *Letopisnyi sbornik, imenuemyi Patriarsheiu ili Nikonovskoiu letopis’iu*, in *PSRL*, vol. 10, pp. 63–64.

<sup>160</sup> ‘...яко за таковое преслушание к родителю си дръжавнаго Коньстантина тогда бысть казнь отъ бога и чудо предивно’/for such disobedience to his parent, this sovereign Konstantin was then punished by God in the form of this miracle, *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 1, p. 460.

son did not occur, and to obscure the reality of collateral succession that occurred after Vsevolod's death.<sup>161</sup> The symbolic emphasis that the *SK* places on Konstantin's disobedience to his father and the resultant revoking of his right to rule on his father's throne in Vladimir directly undermines his mother Mariia's endorsement of her firstborn son. Instead of removing Mariia's *pouchenie* and the descriptions of her relationship with Konstantin, as happens with numerous other episodes present in the predecessors, the *SK* selectively edits this episode, transforming its symbolic significance to bolster the chronicle's broader visions of legitimate succession and patrimony.

This leads to the second way in which Mariia's *pouchenie* differs from Dmitrii's. In the case of Dmitrii, the authority to endow this patrimony is expressed through paternal genealogical precedence (reference to fathers and grandfathers) and through reference to the issue of the heirs from the body of the Grand Prince (*plod'' chreva*). Whereas, despite the fact that Mariia cannot officially bestow the right to rule on her sons, the *SK* nevertheless takes pains to remove references to the two things that support Dmitrii's claim to dynastic legitimacy; body and genealogy. As discussed above in Section 1 (pp. 9-10), pre-existing references to the issue of offspring from her maternal body (*chresla*) present in earlier redactions of Mariia's *pouchenie* are removed in the *SK*, diminishing Mariia's body as a locus of dynastic authority. Moreover, references to maternal genealogies are also erased. The compilers remove references to historical mother-son precedents which could act to legitimatise the royal authority of her instruction to her sons.

In both the fifteenth-century *Simeonovskaia* and sixteenth-century *Nikonovskaia* versions of the text, which precede the *SK* version, there are multiple associations between Mariia and Konstantin and other mother-son pairs. These include the Byzantine rulers Helen and Constantine, Theodora and Michael, as well as an allusion to Ol'ga of Kyiv. These figures are all evoked to contextualise and legitimise Mariia's instruction of her sons. The compilers of the *SK* version are evidently familiar with these earlier texts, since the instruction follows the same *topos*, but in each case, the reference to historical maternal precedent is removed.

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<sup>161</sup> In reality, the throne went first to Iurii Vsevolodovich (1212-1216), then Konstantin (1216-1218), then Iurii again (1218-1238), and only in 1236 to Yaroslav Vsevolodovich, the prince whom the *SK* wishes to construct as Vsevolod's true heir as he is the father of Alexander Nevsky, a key figure in Muscovite myth history.

| Table 5. Comparison of historical maternal references in the account of Mariia Shvarnovna as found in the <i>SK</i> and its predecessor, the <i>Nikonovskaia letopis'</i>  |   |
|--|---|
| <i>Nikonovskaia letopis'</i> (late 1550s)  | <i>SK</i> (1560s)   |
| <p>...ибо отъ корени благаго благый возрасте плодъ, якоже великий Константинъ отъ святыя Елены, якоже Михаилъ отъ блаженныя Феодоры. Тако и сиа новая блаженная Елена и новая Феодора съ сыномъ своимъ Константиномъ Всеволодичемъ, подражаючи блаженную Олгу и всехъ оныхъ блаженныхъ женъ, иже дети своа во благоверии и в законе Христове воспиташа, и въ поучении книжномъ возрасти и наказа...<sup>162</sup></p> <p><i>...for from a blessed root a blessed fruit will grow, just as the great Konstantin [grew] from the holy Elena, and as Michael [grew] from the blessed Theodora. It happened in the same way with this blessed new Elena and new Theodora and her son Konstantin Vsevolodich, following the example of the blessed Ol'ga and all the other blessed women who brought up their children in piety according to the law of Christ, and so [she] brought [him] up and instructed [him] in the teachings of Scripture...</i></p> | <p>...ибо отъ корени благаго благии возрасте плодъ. Его же во благоверии наказа и научи заповедемъ Божиимъ...<sup>163</sup></p> <p><i>...for from a blessed root a blessed fruit will grow. She taught and instructed him piously about God's commandments...</i></p> |

The editing of this passage disrupts the connection between Mariia and a canon of holy maternal figures who teach their children and weakens the association of motherhood with teaching, which is accentuated in the previous redactions. In general, the historical continuity of maternal authority over the education of children is not stressed in the *SK*. Thus, while the motif of teaching remains, its specifically 'maternal' quality is absent.

The same tendency to remove associations between Mariia and historic maternal figures is displayed in the *SK*'s rewriting of Mariia's blessing of her sons. The text of the *Simeonovskaia letopis'* associates the moment of maternal blessing with Rebekah's blessing of Jacob in the Old Testament:

<sup>162</sup> *Letopisnyi sbornik, imenuemyi Patriarsheiu ili Nikonovskoiu letopis'iu*, in *PSRL*, vol. 10, pp. 49-50.

<sup>163</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 1, p. 458.

Она же въздвигшися и благослови и, яко же благослови Ревека Иакова...<sup>164</sup>

*She rose and blessed him, as Rebekah blessed Jacob*

The connection is notable, as Rebekah and Jacob conspired against Rebekah's aging husband Isaac, so as to grant Jacob the right of inheritance over his elder brother Esau. This allusion, which associates maternal blessing with the subversion of the patriarchal system of succession, is edited out in the *Nikonovskaia letopis'* and in the *SK*. I posit that the removal of Mariia's associations with celebrated female figures is explicitly connected to the potential challenge such a mother-child bond might make to that of father and son.

The *SK* does retain, and even accentuates, parallels between Mariia and biblical patriarchs; Job, and Abraham. However, these parallels accentuate not her parental or regal legitimacy, but celebrate other qualities. For instance, Mariia is compared to Job for her forbearance in the face of suffering: *pominaiushchi terpenie pravednago Ieva* (reminiscent of the patience of the righteous Job).<sup>165</sup> The *SK* also imagines Job as the ideal role model for Dmitrii Donskoi. However, the way in which mother and father are compared to Job diverges. In the case of Dmitrii the comparison is with Job's paternal identity:

Обычай жа имеяще великий князь Дмитрий Ивановичъ яко Давидъ богоотецъ и пророкъ Сауловы дети миловаше, тако и сий великий князь неповинныя любляше, а повинныя прощаше по великому Иеву, яко отецъ миру...<sup>166</sup>

*Custom has it that the Grand Prince Dmitrii Ivanovich, just as God's priest David and the prophet Saul had mercy upon children, so did this Grand Prince love the innocent, and forgive the guilty as the great Job did, as a father to the world...*

The comparison between Dmitrii and Job functions in the same way as the attribution of *chresla* and *chrevo* to the Prince; it legitimises his rule by emphasising his status as a

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<sup>164</sup> *Simeonovskaia letopis'*, in *PSRL*, vol. 18, p. 41.

<sup>165</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 1, p. 456.

<sup>166</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 2, p. 58.



parent/father. Parenthood and rulership mutually construct one another in the *SK*, with the result that parenthood is associated almost exclusively with paternity. While Mariia is compared to Job, she is not celebrated as a parent, because it is not her identity as ruler that is at stake. In a similar way to Ol'ga, the *SK* constructs Mariia not as a mother to her son but as a spiritual 'parent' to the dynasty. In the first line of the account in Degree VI, Mariia is named as the 'fruitful spouse' (*blagoplodnaia supruzh'nitsa*) of the ruling prince Vsevolod. What directly follows this description, however, is not the elaboration of her relationship with the children but an account of how, mirroring the biblical patriarch Abraham, she buys a plot to build a church and monastery where future generations of dynastic family members will be buried. In the earlier *Simeonovskaia letopis'* the founding of the monastery is mentioned only later, at the end of the narrative. By relocating this passage to the opening lines, the *SK* emphasises that the primary reason for Mariia's sanctity is the provision of land and the founding of a monastery. In a similar way, the comparison with Abraham appears only near the end of the narrative in the *Simeonovskaia letopis'*, in connection with the preparation of Mariia's grave. In the *SK*, the reference to Mariia's grave is removed, and the passage instead reads that she bought land 'in order to build a church and a monastery'.<sup>167</sup> To strengthen this genealogy of holy place that Mariia spawns, the *SK* features a list of the future dynastic generations who were subsequently buried in the monastery and even specifies where in the monastery they were buried, information not included in earlier accounts.

The third element that the *SK* reimagines is the physical and emotional connection between mother and child. All parents, whether mothers, fathers, princes, princesses or spiritual fathers, such as patriarchs, metropolitans and priests were expected to demonstrate love for children (*chadoliubie*). Since parenthood is cast as a relationship of authority and submission regardless of blood relation, the correct performance of loving, as with teaching and blessing, establishes the authoritative position of the parent in relation to the child. The love of the child is synonymous with submission and respect to the parent. In the *SK*'s account of Mariia, the physical and emotional relationship between mother and child is unknotted and re-written to downplay the emotional effect Mariia has on her son. This manifests on two occasions; at the moment of parental blessing, and at the death of the mother.

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<sup>167</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 1, p. 456.

In the *Simeonovskaia letopis'*, Mariia's son Konstantin falls to the ground in front of his mother to ask for her blessing. In both the *Nikonovskaia letopis'* and the *SK*, this physical act of subservience is replaced instead with the neutral statement that Konstantin 'received a blessing from her'.<sup>168</sup> Through this simple reframing of Konstantin's act towards his mother, the physical, emotional and hierarchical nature of the mother-child relationship is reconfigured. When he falls on the ground before her, Konstantin's physical submission and, by implication, depth of emotional feeling accentuate her dominant position over him. In the sixteenth-century reformulations, the physical and emotional connection between them is tightly controlled.

The same strategy is apparent in the *SK*'s reformulation of Konstantin's response to his mother's death. The *Simeonovskaia letopis'* narrative includes a lament that Konstantin performs when Mariia dies. This lament is almost an exact reproduction of Boris' lament for his father Prince Vladimir in the *Life of Boris and Gleb* (*Skazanie, strast' i pokhvala sviatykh muchenikov Borisa i Gleba*), an eleventh-century hagiography of the earliest native saints of Rus'.<sup>169</sup> The text describes Konstantin's longing to see the beauty of his mother's body once more, to kiss her lips, and describes how the son weeps and tears out his hair because of his love for her. In heavily relying on the *Life of Boris and Gleb*, the *Simeonovskaia letopis'* imbues the mother-son relationship with an emotional significance and weight equal to that of the father-son relationship between Boris and Prince Vladimir. In both sixteenth-century redactions of Mariia's text—that is, in the *SK* and the *Nikonovskaia letopis'*—the parallels between Konstantin's lament and that of Boris are absent. Extended descriptions of Konstantin's emotional turmoil following his mother's death are also omitted. What remains is a simple statement constructed from selected extracts of the *Simeonovskaia letopis'* that tell readers that Konstantin was sad because he was loved by his mother. Even in this short statement, Mariia's love for her son is downplayed. 'He was greatly loved by her' (*biashe bo liubim'' mater'iu po veliku*) becomes 'he was loved by her' (*liubim'' byst' ot'' neia*).<sup>170</sup> Boris' extended lament to his father is part of the hagiography's legitimising of Vladimir

<sup>168</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 1, p. 458.

<sup>169</sup> 'Skazanie o Borise i Glebe', ed. by L. A. Dmitriev, in *Biblioteka Literatury Drevnei Rusi* (hereafter *BLDR*), vol. 1, ed. by D. S. Lihachev, L. A. Dmitriev, A. A. Alekseev and N. V. Ponyrko (Saint Petersburg: Nauka, 1997), pp. 328-351.

<sup>170</sup> *Simeonovskaia letopis'*, in *PSRL*, vol. 18, p. 41; *Letopisnyi sbornik, imenuemyi Patriarsheiu ili Nikonovskoiu letopis'iu*, in *PSRL*, vol. 10, p. 50 and *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 1, p. 458.

as a worthy ruler, and Boris as a worthy and obedient son. In removing the emotional parallels with the *Life of Boris and Gleb* and in diminishing the narrative significance of the love that Konstantin displays for his mother and that she displays for him, the *SK* reconfigures the authoritative relationship between them.

In its desire to instil dynastic genealogical legitimacy into the Riurikid male line, the *SK* constructs an ideology of parenthood which is inscribed into the body, the actions and the emotions of the prince. Parenthood and rulership are so tightly intertwined that, although motherhood and fatherhood constitute the same set of practices, the mother is never able to satisfactorily perform the role of parent, since the text does not imagine her in a position of rulership.

#### 4. Ecclesiastical births

The examples of Ol'ga and Mariia have shown that the symbolic identity of royal mothers in the *SK* is not primarily based on their maternal identity; either on their fertility or their relationship with their children. The Muscovite royal genealogical compendium *does* place symbolic value on the conception, gestation and birth of heirs. However, it celebrates the ceremonial and ritualised aspects of these processes, as circumscribed by the ecclesiastical establishment and the dynasty, rather than the physical aspects associated with the royal mother or her body. The *SK* endows narratives of conception, gestation and birth with symbolic meaning through stories of miraculous pilgrimages, premonitions and baptism rites. In other words, the birth of heirs is framed as a recurrent ecclesiastical miracle symbolising the union of Church and State.

Ecclesiastical intervention in the narrative of conception, gestation and birth manifests in the development of the trope of the miraculous conception or birth of the ruler. In this trope, the ruler is conceived or brought into the world through the intercession and prayers of the father, or through the actions of a holy man, priest, monk or Metropolitan.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Several scholars have noted that the trope of miraculous conception and birth appears with increasing regularity in Muscovite hagiography and royal panegyrics in the sixteenth century, having been uncommon prior to this period. For a discussion of the implications of miraculous births for the changing cultural conceptualisation of marriage in this period, see Nick Mayhew, 'Banning 'Spiritual Brotherhoods'', 102-104. Isolde Thyrêt sees the promotion of this trope in the context of the Muscovite royal family not only as a means of glorifying the Muscovite ruler, but also as a way for the mothers of

From Degree XIV (Metropolitans Ion and Feodosii; Grand Prince Vasilii II) to Degree XVII (Metropolitans Iosaf', Makarii, Afonasii, Filip', Kirill', Antonii; Grand Prince Ivan IV), miraculous births feature in the introduction of every new ruler. In Degree XIV at the birth of Vasilii II (r. 1425-1462), for instance, his mother Sofiia Vitovtovna is overtaken by a great weakness, and his father, Grand Prince Vasilii I, sends to the local monastery for an old holy man (*nekii starets sviat'*) to pray for his wife.<sup>172</sup> The old man advises Vasilii I to pray to the Lord God, the Mother of God and to the martyr Longinus, who 'helps at all births', and prophecies that the Grand Princess will give birth to a son. Even the name of the unborn infant (Vasilii) is foretold. The prophecy, naturally, is fulfilled. At the moment of the birth itself the *SK* narrative is diverted away from the scene of the birth and focuses on the spiritual advisor of the grand Prince, who receives a miraculous vision telling him that the child has been born. Procreative power is first and foremost associated with prophetic utterance of the holy man, and only parenthetically attributed to the maternal body. Similarly, in Degree XV, the birth of Ivan III is foretold by a holy person of noble birth, by the name of Mikhail (*nikto in' sviat' ot' vel'mozh'ska rodu, imenem' Mikhail*).<sup>173</sup>

In Degree XVI, St. Sergii of Radonezh oversees Grand Princess Sophia Palaiologina's conception of an heir. Having struggled to conceive, she is on a pilgrimage to his monastery to pray for the birth of an heir when she sees a vision of a holy man who hurls a baby into her insides (*vverzhe v' nedra velikoi kniagine*).<sup>174</sup> The resultant baby, Vasilii III, is born on the Feast of the Annunciation. In her book on religious symbolism and the royal women of the Muscovite dynasty, Isolde Thyrêt sees the *SK*'s description of Sophia's pilgrimage as key evidence pointing to the myth of 'the Tsaritsa's Blessed Womb', as she terms it, which is the idea that the royal women of the dynasty are 'receptacle[s] of divine grace during the conception of the ruler'.<sup>175</sup> Thyrêt places the appearance of this myth in the late fifteenth century with the figure of Sophia

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the dynasty to promote their symbolic authority as vessels of the divine: Isolde Thyrêt, "'Blessed is the Tsaritsa's Womb': The Myth of Miraculous Birth and Royal Motherhood in Muscovite Russia", *The Russian Review*, 53.4 (Oct 1994), 479-496.

<sup>172</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 2, p. 129.

<sup>173</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 2, p. 218.

<sup>174</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 2, p. 250.

<sup>175</sup> Thyrêt, "'Blessed is the Tsaritsa's Womb'", 480.

Palaiologina, and traces it across a range of elite Muscovite sources, including chronicles and tapestries commissioned by the royal women themselves. She argues that at various key moments across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Muscovite *tsaritsy* sought purposefully to consolidate their political position by ‘shift[ing] attention from the child as the desired product’ to the sanctity of their own bodies, thus ‘transcending the narrow biological definition of their motherhood and giving it a larger, religious meaning’.<sup>176</sup> Thyrêt’s attention to the wealth and importance of gendered religious symbolism in late Muscovite elite culture is unique and invaluable, and her wide-ranging study frequently highly persuasive. However, I feel that her argument works less well specifically in the context of the *SK*, and suggest that her overarching conclusion, while it benefits from such a broad evidence base, might at points also benefit from greater nuance and recognition of the many and varied purposes such symbolism might serve in different ideological contexts (that of the *SK* being potentially quite different from that of a tapestry produced by the direct order of the tsaritsa herself, for example). Specifically, I venture to disagree with her on the specific point about the symbolic role of the female reproductive body in the *SK*’s portrayal of Sofiia Palaiologina and Elena Glinskaia. While Thyrêt reads the narratives of these women as focussing on the spiritual extension or ‘transcendence’ of their biological motherhood, I would argue that what we witness is less a transcendence than an absence or erasure of female biology. When Sofiia’s narrative is considered within the broader context of conception narratives in the *SK*, it is clear that it conforms to the wider pattern of rewriting the biological processes of reproduction associated with the female body as miracles performed by men of the political and ecclesiastical establishments. As Thyrêt observes, the coincidence of the appearance of the child on the day of the Annunciation is evidently an invitation to read Vasilii’s birth as miraculous; the product of an immaculate conception.<sup>177</sup> However, I venture to disagree that this episode seeks explicitly to celebrate Sofiia or her body as a divine vessel. If this were the case, one might expect that this miracle would encourage words of praise, or comparisons within the narrative of the royal mother with the Mother of God. However, the text never explicitly glorifies Sofiia for her miraculous conception or celebrates her reproductive body in any way. After the moment in the text where Sofiia

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<sup>176</sup> Thyrêt, “‘Blessed is the Tsaritsa’s Womb’”, 495; Thyrêt, *Between God and Tsar*, p.16.

<sup>177</sup> Thyrêt, “‘Blessed is the Tsaritsa’s Womb’”, 488.

conceives in her *chrevo* a God-given heir (*zachatsia vo chreve eia bogodarovannyi naslednik*), neither the mother's name or her body is never again mentioned, suggesting that it is Vasili, rather than his mother, who is the central figure in this miracle story. Taking the place of Sofiia, St. Sergii is allotted a key role in Vasili's baptism.

The example of Elena Glinskaia consolidates this point. The pattern of ecclesiastical intervention in conception and birth continues in Degrees XVI and XVII, which cover the birth of Ivan IV (r. 1533-84). Here, the mother plays an ever more diminutive role in the conception of her son. The onus is now more firmly on the father, Vasili III, to occupy himself with ceaseless prayer, pilgrimage and charity to effect the conception of a child, and less on the Grand Princess Elena (described as his 'helper' in these activities).<sup>178</sup> Vasili unceasingly travels from monastery to monastery, commissioning icons, showing hospitality to monks and giving his wealth to the poor, for which he is rewarded by God:

И сихъ ради милосердый Богъ разверзе союзъ неплодства его и дарова ему  
родити сына<sup>179</sup>

*And for these reasons merciful God undid the union of his infertility and enabled  
him to give birth to a son*

Ivan IV's birth is foretold by three separate male ecclesiastical figures, according to the *SK*: 'a certain holy monk, by the name of Galaktion'" (*nekotoryi inok" sviat", imenem" Galaktion"*), 'a certain holy fool, by the name of Domentii' (*nek[ii] muzh urodiva, imenem" Domentiiia*) and the priest who performs the holy liturgy nine days before his birth.<sup>180</sup> Neither at the conception or birth of the infant Ivan IV does his mother Elena play a prominent narrative role, apart from to facilitate the prophesy of the holy fool by asking him about the birth, and she is absent at his baptism. In the latter case, this is most likely because the baptism took place sooner than forty days after the birth of the

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<sup>178</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 2, p. 316.

<sup>179</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 2, p. 316. Referring here to his first marriage with Solomoniia Saburova, which was childless.

<sup>180</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 2, p. 345.

child, during the period when the mother was still considered to be impure.<sup>181</sup> However, in cases where the mother could not be present at the naming or baptism of the child, her role in the ceremony was replaced by the wet-nurse (*baba*), who presents the child to the priest, and this custom is evidenced by the frequent and explicit naming of the *baba* in baptism and purification rites in Muscovite service books.<sup>182</sup> The father is not explicitly mentioned in these rites.

However, in the description of Ivan's baptism at the Trinity Lavra of St. Sergii in the *SK*, while Elena Glinskaia remains in Moscow his father Vasilii III takes on the ritual role of the mother or *baba* in the baptism ceremony. Vasilii both presents the infant Ivan to the hegumen of the monastery before the baptism and receives him from the hegumen and the two godfathers, monks Daniil of Pereiaslavl and Kasian" Bosyi, after the ceremony has finished.<sup>183</sup>

Vasilii then takes the newly blessed infant Ivan and places him in the tomb of St. Sergii, onto the saints' relics, and prays to the saint:

О преподобный светильниче, чудотворивый Сергие! Ты отцемъ отецъ и со дерзновениемъ предстоиши Святей Троицы и молитвою твоею даровалъ ми еси чадо<sup>184</sup>

*O venerable light source, miracle-working Sergii! You are a father to fathers and daringly stand before the Holy Trinity and through your prayer you granted me this child*

Hence, Ivan's 'second birth' as recounted in the *SK* is effected entirely by a series of ecclesiastical and dynastic father figures, and no maternal figures are present

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<sup>181</sup> Ivan was born on the 25<sup>th</sup> August 1530 and baptised on the 4<sup>th</sup> September. Often in Muscovy the mother would play a prominent role in the baptism ceremony, as it was commonly organised to coincide with the mother's own purification ritual and her re-entry into the Church, which took place on the fortieth day after the birth. In these cases, the mother would present the child to the priest, mirroring the Presentation of Christ at the Temple, and both mother and child would be blessed, purified and receive communion together. However, in the case of Ivan IV the two ceremonies were separated.

<sup>182</sup> Levin, 'Childbirth in Pre-Petrine Russia' in *Russia's Women*, ed. by Clements, Alpern Engel and Worobec, pp. 49-50.

<sup>183</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 2, p. 317-8.

<sup>184</sup> *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 2, p. 318.

whatsoever.<sup>185</sup> This episode constitutes the culmination of the *SK*'s narratives of patriarchal procreation. Ivan is the fruit both of the Riurikid dynasty, as represented by Vasilii III, and the monastic establishment, as represented by Daniil of Pereiaslavl, Kasian Bosyi, and, most importantly, St. Sergii of Radonezh, the 'father to fathers'. St. Sergii intercedes before God to undo Vasilii's bond with infertility and grants him a child, in so doing bypassing the biological requirement for a mother. Then Vasilii replaces the mother/*baba* in Ivan's 'second birth', the baptism ceremony, thus subverting the standard ritual requirements for a mother. Ivan's parentage is rooted in two patriarchal establishments, and he himself therefore embodies the union of Church and State. In this way, the construction of Ivan IV's authority over land, faith and dynasty plays out in the *SK* through the narrative construction of parenthood as a narrative singularly, of fatherhood.

## 5. Conclusion

Parenthood in the *SK* is a textual construct, reflecting ideas about rulership. The construction of an ideology of parenthood in this symbolic dynastic history is a means of legitimising the rule of the Muscovite Tsar Ivan IV through reference to patrilineality and patrimony. Parenthood and rulership are constructed in tandem and inscribed into the body, behaviour and emotion of the prince. The compilers of the *SK* have little concern for emphasising reproductive difference between mothers and fathers or constructing and deploying ideologies of motherhood. Women are not excluded, necessarily, from performing the *SK*'s vision of parenthood. Exceptional women can take on a 'fathering' role with respect to their offspring. However, royal mothers are consistently represented as chaste, while princely bodies are fertile. Maternal performance of parenthood tends to be diminished, or framed as unsuccessful, and the mother celebrated for her symbolic contribution to dynastic legitimacy. These textual strategies allow, ultimately, for the construction of Ivan IV as the offspring of and heir to both the ecclesiastical and dynastic

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<sup>185</sup> At the opening to the account of the baptism, the *SK* describes the ceremony, in a standard Orthodox formulation, as the time when 'the Tsar's child came to be born for the second time in water and in spirit'/время тому царскому отрочати второе породитися водою и духомъ', *Stepennaia kniga*, vol. 2, p. 317.



establishments, through the representation of his two fathers: Grand Prince Vasili III and St. Sergii of Radonezh.

## CHAPTER III: SUFFERING AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE MOTHER IN MUSCOVITE POETRY

### 1. Introduction

As a genealogy of the Muscovite royal family, the sixteenth-century *Stepennaia kniga* envisioned parenthood through the prism of rulership and patrimony. The representation of both parental bodies and parental behaviour was dictated by dynastic concerns of male-line primogeniture. Reproductive agency was attributed to male rulers but was absent from descriptions of royal women, and biological processes such as conception and childbirth were framed as miracles effected by holy men of the Muscovite Orthodox Church. In this scheme, ideologies of motherhood were side-lined.

In the seventeenth century, aesthetic and formal shifts associated with the spread of the Baroque into Muscovite literary culture from Belarus, Ukraine and Poland fundamentally transformed how the human body was represented and what, in turn, it could represent. This chapter explores how this contributed to the development of a distinct discourse on motherhood, as separate from fatherhood, and of the kind absent from the *SK*.

Muscovite literature in previous centuries had been dominated by narrative representational forms; lyric verse forms had been limited mostly either to the musical poetry associated with the liturgy (hymnography, prayer), or folklore (oral genres such as songs and proverbs). In the seventeenth century, however, under the influence of Western modes, poetry began to spread beyond the confines of the Church and started to depict secular themes.<sup>186</sup> This had the effect of transplanting emotional expression characteristic of the lyric mode, such as declarations of love and sorrow, which prior to this were addressed almost exclusively to Christ, the Mother of God or to exceptional figures such as saints or the Grand Prince, into the realm of everyday family relations. This chapter

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<sup>186</sup> For some general overviews of the literature changes associated with the Muscovite seventeenth century, see L. I. Sazonova, *Literaturnaia kul'tura Rossii: Rannee novoe vremia*, (Moscow: Iazyki Slavianskikh Kul'tur, 2006) and *Poeziia russkogo barokko (vtoraia polovina XVII-nachalo XVIII v.)* (Moscow: Nauka, 1991); and on the rise of poetry specifically, see A. A. Panchenko, *Russkaia stikhotvornaia kul'tura XVII veka* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1973) and Andrew Kahn, Mark Naumovich, Irina Reyfman Lipovetskii and Stephanie Sandler, 'Poets' in *A History of Russian Literature*, Part II. The Seventeenth Century (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 158-183.

interrogates how the representation of parenthood in seventeenth-century poetry differs from that encountered in sixteenth-century narratives, placing it in the broader context of the Baroque preoccupation with emotionality and embodiment. I examine how the new poetic mode reframed and reinterpreted existing Orthodox tropes and themes, bringing the maternal body to the fore as the preeminent symbol of sacrificial love.

I explore how biological processes of childbirth and feeding are imbued with emotional nuance as symbols of sacrifice, compassion and protection through use of figurative language: metaphor, allegory and emblem; the latter being a rhetorical device particularly associated with Baroque culture. The emblem was an allegorical illustration; a synthesis of picture and text whose symbolic combination was intended to convey an abstract idea or moral concept. Often, body parts were used as emblems. For instance, the skull was an emblem of the transitory nature of human life and might be accompanied by a suitable citation from Scripture and a florid explication of its eschatological message. Emblems were collected in 'emblem books' which developed into a distinct genre of text in Europe in this period. The nascent use of this figurative language in seventeenth-century Muscovite poetic culture engaged the physical suffering endured by the mother throughout the reproductive cycle as a literary trope. This trope is used, on the one hand, to construct and explicate the ideal relationship between parent and child and, on the other, is extended to express abstract values of sacrificial love beyond the family. Through the celebration of maternal pain, Muscovite poetry binds the female body to the nurture of children, both physical and moral.

This chapter tracks the genesis of the poetic discourse of maternal sacrifice across the seventeenth century. I focus on two sources, beginning with an early example of poetry about motherhood from the 1630s-40s known as the *Poslanie k materem* (*Letter to mothers*), and proceeding to a poem of Simeon of Polatsk from 1669 entitled the *Freny ili Plachi vseh sanov i chinov pravoslavnorossiiskogo tsarstva o smerti Blagovernia i Khristoliubivya Gosudaryni Tsaritsy i Velikiia Kniagini Marii Ilichny* (*Freny or lamentations of all the orders and levels of the Orthodox Russian kingdom on the death of the blessed and Christ-loving Lady Tsaritsa and Grand Princess Mariia Ilichna*). In the first section I compare the *Poslanie k materem* with the *Domostroi*, a sixteenth-century domestic manual from which the poem borrows much of its content about parent-child relations. I highlight the shift in the symbolic significance of the parental body

between these two texts. The *Poslanie k materem* incorporates many of the same Scriptural references as the *Domostroi* but engages with them in a new rhetorical discourse. It exploits the symbolic potential of physical suffering in childbirth and feeding, using maternal bodily imagery as metaphors to construct the emotional and moral identity of the parent (both mother and father). In the second section of the chapter I consider how Simeon of Polatsk consolidates the cultural connection between maternal corporeality and emotional sacrifice in the *Freny* through his employment of the suffering mother as an allegorical figure. Simeon uses the maternal body in childbirth to construct a series of allegorical emblems through which he expresses abstract ideas about grief, death, the necessity of worldly suffering and the resilience of the Orthodox Church.

Before moving on to the analysis of the poems themselves, I provide a short introduction to the sources, lay out my theoretical approach and also outline some of the existing scientific and literary conventions which regulated the relationship between body and emotion in Muscovite culture, as these play a key role in the development of the figurative language encountered in poetry.

### 1.1 Introduction to sources

The prevailing narrative in Muscovite literary history is to see the birth of the Baroque in the mid-seventeenth-century, in connection with the emergence of syllabic verse in the poetry of Simeon of Polatsk, and in the specific context of a few figures close to the court who were educated in the scholastic tradition at the Kyiv-Mohyla academy.<sup>187</sup> Although it is undeniable that characteristically Baroque rhetorical techniques such as the emblem do not feature in early seventeenth-century verse, I propose that it is productive to consider images of maternal sacrifice in the early seventeenth-century poem *Poslanie k materem* in light of stylistic and thematic trends that would be developed in Simeon's poetry in the later part of the century.

In the first half of the seventeenth century lyric verse was characterised by rhyming couplets with no strict adherence to a syllabic or metric structure (i.e. rhyming free verse, where the number of syllables and stresses per line is irregular), commonly referred to as 'pre-syllabic'. Many of the key figures writing this type of verse whose

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<sup>187</sup> Sazonova, *Literaturnaia kul'tura* Rossii, pp. 30-31.

work survives were churchmen employed as editors of holy books at the Moscow Printing Office (*Pechatnyi dvor*) or other petty officials, sometimes known as the *prikaznye poety* (Chancery poets), whose activity flourished from the 1630s to the 1650s.<sup>188</sup>

The epistle, or *stikhotvornoe poslanie*, was particularly characteristic of this school. A. M. Panchenko notes that the spread of this particular type of verse in Muscovy was most probably influenced by educational and literary trends coming from Poland and Ukraine, since epistle-writing was taught as a component of rhetoric and poetics at the Kyiv Mohyla Academy during this period.<sup>189</sup> The *Poslanie k materem* belongs to this poetic genre of rhyming free verse and survives alongside another similar letter-in-verse from a son to his father, the *Poslanie ot syna ko svoemu ottsu* (*Letter from a son to his father*). These two poems are considered to be responses to a further poem, attributed to the *prikaznyi* poet Stefan Gorchak, entitled the *Nakazanie nekoego ottsa k synu svoemu, daby on podvizalsia o dobrykh delekh vynu*, (*Instruction from a father to his son, that he may always strive towards good deeds*). All have been dated roughly to the 1630s or 40s and attributed to the circle of the Printing Office poets. In the only published edition of these poems, which was produced in 1989, the editors V. K. Bylinin and A. A. Iliushin group them together due to assumptions about their authorship.<sup>190</sup> The editors explain that they attribute the *Nakazanie nekoego ottsa* to the *prikaznyi* poet Stefan Gorchak and the son's responses—the two *Poslaniia*—to Gorchak's son (an unknown figure) for two reasons. The first being that in the poem from son to father the latter is named Stefan, of which there is only one known poet of that circle. The second being that both poems 'play on many of the motifs of the *Nakazanie nekoego ottsa*'.<sup>191</sup> There seems no clear reason why the poems from son to father or son to mother should necessarily be written either by the same author or in direct response to the author of the *Nakazanie nekoego ottsa*, rather than by authors simply familiar with the work. A number of the common motifs used in these poems are also found, for instance, in the poetry of a contemporary of Gorchak at the Printing Office, often referred to by scholars as 'Spravshchik Savvatii' after his profession as editor of holy books.<sup>192</sup> For the purposes of this chapter the question

<sup>188</sup> Panchenko, 'Prikaznaia Shkola' in *Russkaia stikhotvornaia kul'tura*, pp. 34-102.

<sup>189</sup> Panchenko, *Russkaia stikhotvornaia kul'tura*, pp. 65-66.

<sup>190</sup> V. K. Bylinin and A. A. Iliushin, eds., *Virshevaia Poeziia (pervaia polovina XVII veka)* (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1989), pp. 421-423.

<sup>191</sup> Bylinin and Iliushin, eds., *Virshevaia Poeziia*, pp. 422.

<sup>192</sup> Panchenko, *Russkaia stikhotvornaia kul'tura*, p. 63.

of authorship isn't particularly crucial, and so I leave it open. For me, the fact that these poems evidently belong to the same genre of the epistle and play on the same recurring tropes and themes is enough to warrant their comparison. They provide a unique opportunity to compare the early 17<sup>th</sup>-century poetic construction of the mother and the father.

Literary historians have, for the most part, seen the verse of the early seventeenth century as representative of a shift in form but not really in content, since it often reworks well-known religious subjects (prayers on feast days, introductions to pre-existing religious texts, parables on the sins and virtues, and so on), or pre-existing prose genres such as letters and petitions (*chelobitnye*). The *Nakazanie nekoego ottsa*, *Poslanie ot syna ko svoemu ottsu* and *Poslanie k materem* are often categorised as reworkings of the first Muscovite domestic handbook, the sixteenth-century *Domostroi*, since they share certain instructions and scriptural references. Russian literary historian V. N. Peretts labelled the *Nakazanie nekoego ottsa* the 'Domostroi in verse' (*Virshevyi Domostroi*) precisely because of its similarity to the sixteenth-century monument.<sup>193</sup>

The *Domostroi* is a domestic manual addressed to the Muscovite family with instructions on different topics including discipline, assignment of domestic tasks, dining etiquette and behaviour in Church. These instructions can be grouped roughly into three sections: spiritual discipline, family discipline and household discipline. Adapted from existing compilations of Byzantine Christian moral teachings such the *Izmaragd*, the *Zlatoust* and the *Zlataia Tsep'* which had been circulating in Muscovy for several centuries, it is thought that the earliest versions of the *Domostroi* existed in Novgorod from as early as the late-fifteenth century.<sup>194</sup> It was then re-written in Moscow in the mid-1500s by Silvestr, archpriest and spiritual advisor to Ivan IV.<sup>195</sup>

V. N. Peretts correctly recognises the similarities in content between the *Nakazanie nekoego ottsa* and the *Domostroi*, noting that many lines borrow the same

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<sup>193</sup> Bylinin and Iliushin, eds., *Virshevaia Poeziia*, p. 421. The editors note that there are two redactions of this text, the aforementioned 'Nakazanie nekoego ottsa k synu svoemu, daby on podvizalsia o dobrykh delekh vynu', which this chapter utilises throughout, which is found in on pages 132-135, and the 'Pouchenie i nakazanie ottsa k svoim synovom' (*Testament and instruction from a father to his son*), which is on pages 135-138. It is not known which redaction is the earlier.

<sup>194</sup> *Domostroi*, ed. by V. V. Kolesov, V. V. Rozhdestvenskaia and M. V. Pimenova (Moscow: Sovetskaiia Rossiia, 1990), p. 10

<sup>195</sup> For more information about Silvestr's involvement in the compilation of the second redaction, see D. M. Bulanin, V. V. Kolesov, 'Silvestr', in *Slovar' knizhnikov i knizhnosti drevnei Rusi. Vtoraia polovina XIV-XVI vv.* vol. 2 (Leningrad: Nauka, 1989), pp. 323-333.

scriptural references or are direct re-workings or paraphrases of *Domostroi* passages.<sup>196</sup> The father in the *Nakazanie nekoego ottsa* makes the same exhortations using the same scriptural references as the *Domostroi* father in the *Poslanie i nakazanie oto ottsa k synu* (an additional chapter in the Silvestr redaction, constituting a letter from father to son written by Silvestr himself): to be obedient, to go to church regularly, to stay until the end of the service, to not talk in church, to respect those of higher rank, allowing them to sit first at the dining table, to be humble, to love others, and so on. In a similar way, paraphrases of *Domostroi* passages litter the *Poslanie k materem* and its counterpart, the *Poslanie ot syna ko svoemu ottsu*. Despite the similarities in content, I argue that parent-child relations in the seventeenth-century poems are fundamentally reconceptualised from those imagined in the *Domostroi*. Central to this revisioning is the development of a discourse of motherhood as separate from fatherhood, an ideological shift that is closely intertwined with the aesthetic innovations in form, style and function associated with the transition to verse.

One of the first divergences to note between the *Domostroi* and its poetic descendants is their function as literary monuments. The seventeenth-century poems construct an *exchange* between parents and children in the form of letters, whereas, although the *Domostroi* claims to provide instruction for ‘any Christian’, it mainly depicts the father’s relationships along a vertical axis with people either higher or lower than him in the social hierarchy—between father and household (wife, children, servants), between father and Tsar, between father and God. Relationships that do not concern the father and head of household, such as the relationship between mother and child, are either entirely ignored or only briefly elucidated. The son’s poetic letters to his parents provide a new perspective on parenthood, showcasing a differentiation and nuance between maternal, paternal and filial relationships that is almost totally absent in the sixteenth-century source. In response to the instructional missive of the father, the son writes a separate panegyric to each parent in which he celebrates them, glorifies his relationship with them, condemns his own behaviour and asks for forgiveness. Both the *Poslanie k materem* and *Poslanie ot syna ko svoemu ottsu* share the same basic deferential tropes and requests for parental intercession, and the son almost always speaks of his ‘parents’ in the plural in

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<sup>196</sup> V. N. Peretts, ‘Virshevoi Domostroi nachala VIII stoletia’, in *Sbornik statei k 40-letiiu uchenoi deiatel’nosti A. S. Orlova*, ed. by Peretts, V. N. (Leningrad: AN SSSR, 1934), pp. 19–22.

both letters. Beyond these structural and stylistic similarities, however, the son justifies his respect for his ‘parents’ in the respective letters differently. The epistles between father and son have a greater tendency to emphasise the parental-filial relationship as a relationship based on obedience from the son, for fear of discipline and punishment from the father/parents (this model, as I show, broadly follows the *Domostroi*). The epistle from son to mother, however, emphasises the mother’s suffering and pain as the primary motivating factor for the son’s obedience to his parents. Bylinin and Iliushin note that the *Poslanie k materem* calls itself an *umilennoe slovo* (an epithet absent in the letter from father to son) and link this to the contemporary religious genre of *stikhi umilennye*—poetic songs of repentance and confession based around excerpts of the liturgy and addressed to Christ or the Mother-of God that circulated from the sixteenth century.<sup>197</sup> As I show, although both these poetic letters construct the parent-child relationship in line with the relationship between worshipper and spiritual authority, gendered differences emerge in the rhetoric couching the son’s veneration of his mother. These differences are characterised by the development of a sustained discourse on maternal suffering and sacrifice.

## 1.2 Theoretical Approach

Thus far, the history of emotions has been a relatively understudied topic in the field of Muscovite culture—barring the recent studies which I mention in section 1.3, below—and the history of maternal emotion doubly so. The only scholar who has hitherto engaged to any degree with the history of maternal emotionality in pre-modern Russia is Natal’ia Pushkareva, who has argued that mothers’ relationships with their children became increasingly marked by affection and emotional attachment during the seventeenth century. Pushkareva responds to a shift in the emotive language in a range of sources including private letters, secular tales and hagiographies, and suggests that the increased emphasis placed on emotionality in maternal relationships might indicate ‘a greater

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<sup>197</sup> Bylinin and Iliushin, eds., *Virshevaia Poeziia*, p. 423. For more on this genre of religious song, see A. M. Panchenko, ‘Stikhi pokaiannye’, in *PLDR*, vol. 8, ed. by L. A. Dmitriev & D. S. Likhachev (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1986), pp. 550-563, 635-640.



“sociality” in the relations between mothers and children’, which provoked a shift in the emotive values associated with maternity.

Увеличение удельного веса эмоциональности в семейно-родственных отношениях шло параллельно с процессами обмирщения духовной сферы, ростом значимости и ценности частных, личных переживаний, появлением характерных черт индивидуализма и гуманизма. Можно полагать, что развитие этих процессов влекло за собой большую «социальность» в биосоциальных отношениях матерей и детей, их большую осознанность и глубину, ответственность друг за друга, а это, в свою очередь, являлось свидетельством теснейшей связи материнской дидактики с общими ориентациями культуры, с межпоколенной трансмиссией ее традиций и ценностей.<sup>198</sup>

*The increase in the share of emotionality in family and kinship relations ran in parallel with the process of secularisation, the growing importance and value of private, personal experiences, the appearance of characteristic features of individualism and humanism. It can be assumed that the development of these processes entailed a greater “sociality” in the biosocial relations of mothers and children, provoked a greater awareness of and depth to, and feeling of responsibility for these relations and this, in turn, is evidence of the close connection of maternal didactics with the general orientations of [late 17<sup>th</sup>-century] culture and the intergenerational transmission of its traditions and values...*

Pushkareva’s observation of a shift in the way the maternal relationship is depicted in narrative and epistolary sources is astute, and it is this observation to which this chapter in part responds and which it seeks to develop. Yet her conclusion—that the increasing emotionality in textual descriptions of mother-child relations indicates or corresponds to a real increase in affection between mother and children—should be questioned.

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<sup>198</sup> Pushkareva, *Chastnaia zhizn’ russkoi zhenshchiny. Nevesta, zhena, liubovnitsa* (Moscow: Lodomir, 1997).

Pushkareva does not problematise the connection she draws between the discourse of maternal emotionality as expressed in her sources and what mothers in general may or may not have experienced. This is because it seems natural that they should correspond. This conclusion relies on three implicit assumptions: firstly, that the mother-child bond is characterised by a unique form of emotionality, secondly that it is universally experienced, and thirdly that a male or for that matter any writer can accurately capture what individual mothers experience. These assumptions allow her, for example, to take the description of the maternal figure in the seventeenth-century tale *Povest' o Gore-Zlochastii* (*Tale of Woe and Misfortune*) at face value, as this description corresponds to familiar ideas about motherhood. The *Povest'* is a moralistic tale in verse written by an anonymous author. It follows a young man who fails to listen to the good advice of his parents and catalogues the calamities that befall him as a result of his disobedience. He is followed by the spirit of 'woe and misfortune', who besets him with adversity and affliction until he escapes finally escapes only by entering a monastery.<sup>199</sup> According to Pushkareva:

Крохотная зарисовка...героя «Повести о Горе-Злочастии» (XVII в.), пропитанная поразительной нежностью воспоминаний о материнской заботе, заставляет думать, что автор «Повести» «списывал» ее со своих личных чувств и переживаний.<sup>200</sup>

*The humble sketch...of the hero of the 'Povest' o Gore-Zlochastii' (17th-century) is infused with astounding tenderness in its reminiscence of a mother's care, leading one to conclude that the author of the Tale wrote it on the basis of his own personal feelings and experiences.*

Most probably, the reason a reader might view some emotional exhortations as more real than others is if such exhortations personally align with the reader's idea of the relationship being expressed. This chapter seeks to avoid the inclination to either accept emotional language at face value, if it seems sincere, or to dismiss it entirely as rhetoric

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<sup>199</sup> 'Povest' o Gore-Zlochastii', ed. E. I. Vaneeva, in *BLDR*, vol. 15, ed. by D. S. Likhachev, L. A. Dmitriev and N. V. Ponyrko (Saint Petersburg: Nauka, 2006), pp. 31–43.

<sup>200</sup> N. L. Pushkareva, *Chastnaia zhizn' russkoi zhenshchiny*, p.

from which no vestige of real-world feeling can be recovered. It proposes a way of disentangling and deconstructing emotional rhetoric by focussing on identifying and tracing recurrent literary strategies and tropes and interpreting emotional language as a product of its aesthetic context rather than a purely spontaneous expression of true feeling. In this way, stock emotional stereotypes can be interrogated.<sup>201</sup>

My main analytical approach in this chapter is to examine the role of references to the body in emotional rhetoric. This approach is informed by Monique Scheer's article entitled *Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and is that what makes them have a history)? A Bourdieuan Approach to Understanding Emotion*.<sup>202</sup> Based on recent research in cognitive psychology, she posits that it is in fact impossible to understand thought or emotion as separate from their bodily manifestation, and, therefore, we should see them as 'embodied practices'. She writes:

Emotions change over time not only because norms, expectations, words and concepts that shape experience are modified, but also because the practices in which they are embodied, and bodies themselves, undergo transformation.<sup>203</sup>

Scheer's theory provides a concrete method of tracking emotional change; through references to bodies and bodily practices. Although Scheer doesn't explicitly speak about gender, her concept of emotion as 'embodied practice' has particularly productive implications for understanding the relationship between emotion and gender in Muscovite poetry. In the construction of figurative motifs in seventeenth-century poetry emotions become embodied in a way that is absent from the sixteenth-century narrative depiction of family relations. This connection with the body is not inevitable, but the product of specific socio-historical and aesthetic context: the Baroque. I draw on Scheer's approach

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<sup>201</sup> It should be noted that since the publication of *Chastnaia zhizn' russkoi zhenshchiny*, Pushkareva has diversified her methodological spectrum. In recent years she has produced several pioneering works that survey contemporary sociological, psychological, gender and feminist theory and consider the potential contribution these theories might make to the study of Russian history, see for example N. L. Pushkareva, *Gendernaia teoriia i istoricheskoe znanie* (St. Petersburg: Aleteia, 2007) and 'Materinstvo kak sotsiobiologicheskoe iavlenie: psikhologiya, filosofiya, istoriya', *Zapad-Vostok*, 7 (2014), 103-118. As far as I am aware, however, she has not yet utilised these theoretical frameworks directly in case studies of gender in the Russian past.

<sup>202</sup> Monique Scheer, 'Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (And Is That What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieuan Approach to Understanding Emotion' *History and Theory*, 51.2 (May 2012), 193-220. Thanks go to Valerie Kivelson for recommending this article to me.

<sup>203</sup> Scheer, 'Are Emotions a Kind of Practice', *History and Theory*, p. 220.

to demonstrate how this aesthetic context produces a distinctly gendered strain of emotional rhetoric in seventeenth-century poetry about the family. I show how, through the manipulation and exploitation of maternal body parts, behaviours and practices as metaphor, allegory and emblem, maternal love is framed as something inherent and biological in a way that it is not for fathers.

### 1.3 Emotions and the body in Muscovy

The connection between emotionality and corporeality was not something new to seventeenth-century Muscovy; the novel aesthetic forms introduced by the Baroque exploited existing literary themes and notions. Throughout the medieval and early modern periods across Europe the dominant view was that emotions were intensely physical, rather than abstract moods or psychological states. A person's character was thought to depend on the physical composition of the four humours inside their body, which could change depending on the seasons or a person's age. Based on Hippocrates' theory about the four temperaments, later further developed by Galen, those afflicted by too much yellow bile were understood as angry, or 'choleric', melancholic people had an excess of black bile, those in whom blood was predominant were cheerful or 'sanguine', and the 'phlegmatic', naturally, were ruled by phlegm.<sup>204</sup> As mentioned in Chapter I, this humoural model was known in Muscovy from at least the fifteenth century, as witnessed by the circulation of the text *Galinovo na Ippokrata* (Galen on Hippocrates), the earliest copy of which dates to the first quarter of the fifteenth century.<sup>205</sup>

By the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Western Europe, emotions were increasingly considered to be provoked equally by the movement, or conversely, the build-up or blockage of the blood and spirits in the body (hence the word emotion, from the French 'émouvoir'). As Michael Stolberg writes, with reference to early modern French and German medical culture, 'the emotions and the physical, material movement

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<sup>204</sup> W. H. S. Jones, E. T. Withington and Paul Potter, eds. and trans., *Hippocrates, Works*, vol. I (London: Loeb Classical Library/ Heinemann, 1923-88) p. 283. See also Vivian Nutton, 'Humoralism' in *Companion Encyclopedia of the History of Medicine*, ed. by W. F. Bynum and Roy Porter, vol. 1 (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 281-291.

<sup>205</sup> See Chapter I., '(De)constructing Sex in Muscovy', pp. 28-29.

of the blood and the spirits were so closely linked in contemporary medical writing that it is often virtually impossible to distinguish the two.<sup>206</sup>

Muscovite medical sources, too, bear witness to the fact that emotion was considered to be something that moved or flowed within the body. For example, the anatomical tract *O chelovechestem* "estestve" allocates the production of different emotions and moral states to different parts of the body.<sup>207</sup> *Svedeniia po anatomii* echoes the idea that joy and love constituted blood rushing away from the heart towards the loved object, whereas experiences of fear and sadness were brought about by the spirit and blood rushing towards the heart.<sup>208</sup>

Such notions extend beyond medical discourse into other cultural contexts. Valerie Kivelson has recently worked on the relationship between body and emotion in seventeenth-century spells. She suggests that in these spells, love, misery and pain were considered to circulate in the same way as disease.<sup>209</sup> There seems to be little distinction between the physical and emotional experience of these states: emotions were believed to leave physical traces or marks on the body, and likewise could be physically transmitted from one body to another. For example, Kivelson describes one particular spell where the speaker invokes the wind to gather misery, pain and grief from people all over Muscovite lands and carry it to a particular unfortunate victim.<sup>210</sup>

The belief that emotions could be physically transmitted had particularly significance for motherhood because of breastfeeding. As mentioned in Chapter I, in the second half of the seventeenth century, the idea that breast milk transferred not only nutritional nourishment to the child but also moral and emotional sustenance (or corruption) was found in religious writings, including sermons, and also in the poetry of Simeon of Polatsk. Simeon conveys concern in his poem '*Blud so synom sotvorshaia mati*' (*A Mother's Sexual Sin with her Son*) from the *Vertograd mnogotsvetnyi* (1676-

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<sup>206</sup> Michael Stolberg, 'Emotions and the Body in Early Modern Medicine', *Emotion Review*, 11.2 (April 2019), 115.

<sup>207</sup> Chapter I, '(De)constructing Sex in Muscovy', p. 38.

<sup>208</sup> *Svedeniia po anatomii*, RNB Q.VI.20 (17<sup>th</sup> century), Ch. 19: 'On the Heart' (*O serdtse*).

<sup>209</sup> Valerie Kivelson, 'Distributed Personhood and Extruded Selves: Boundaries and Body Parts in Muscovite Magical Spells', unpublished paper delivered at the Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies conference (Boston, 6-9 December 2018).

<sup>210</sup> Kivelson, 'Distributed Personhood and Extruded Selves', p. 23.

1680) that breastfeeding a child for too long might provoke an incestuous form of love between mother and son.<sup>211</sup>

The other current of thought that likely fed into poetic representations of motherhood in Muscovy, I argue, concerned notions of how the body and its parts engendered and regulated love. Stolberg, again, writing on early modern Western Europe, writes that ‘the principal site of the sensitive soul...and of the emotions with it, was the heart’.<sup>212</sup> However, scholars also acknowledge the leading role of the belly in conceptions of emotion, an association which entered European Christian culture from Biblical Hebrew and Classical Greek authors. Roy Porter notes, for example, that Plato placed the ‘irrational element’ of the tri-partite soul—the appetites, or passions—in the belly.<sup>213</sup> Old Testament Jewish culture considered compassion or mercy to reside in these internal parts of the body, denoted by the words *me'im*, *rechem* and *qereb*. These words were rendered in the Greek of the New Testament by the word *spláchnon* (σπλάγχνον), a term that denoted the vital internal organs and also came to denote the location of the human personality, including compassion and mercy.<sup>214</sup> Thus, the association of the belly or bowels at once with uncontrolled emotions or passions, such as greed, gluttony, envy, lust and so on, co-existed with an understanding of this area of the body also as the seat of Christian compassion and tender mercies. As Europe entered into the eighteenth century, however, the solid organs, rather than fluid humours, came to be associated with the regulation of behaviour, health and emotion. Resultantly, the guts, belly and bowels, the area of the body thought to be at the centre of processing humours (distilling food into blood and seed, sending blood to the heart, producing bile, and so on), ‘lost their ancient importance as referents for one’s self and feelings, to be replaced in elite thinking by the head, the brain and the nervous system’.<sup>215</sup>

The heart was, undoubtedly, the primary site of emotional experience in Muscovy, however, the belly and innards also play a key, and as yet an under-researched, role. In her study of Muscovite spells, Kivelson explores how love spells produce physical effects

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<sup>211</sup> Chapter I., *(De)constructing Sex in Muscovy*, pp. 61-62; Polockij, *Vertograd mnogocvetnyj*, vol. 1, ed. by Hippisley and Sazonova, pp. 92-98.

<sup>212</sup> Stolberg, ‘Emotions and the Body’, *Emotion Review*, p. 114.

<sup>213</sup> Porter, *Flesh in the Age of Reason*, p. 31.

<sup>214</sup> John Durham Peters, ‘Bowels of Mercy’, *Brigham Young University Studies*, 38.4 (1999), 29. For New Testament examples see 1 John 3:17, Colossians 3:12, Psalms 7:10, 25:2.

<sup>215</sup> Porter, *Flesh in the Age of Reason*, p. 60.

in the hearts of those bewitched, and how the heart in turn could leave a physical mark on the clothes of a person, which could be used to manipulate their emotional state.<sup>216</sup> Yet she also notes that certain spells target the eyes and innards (*utroba*) of the bewitched, along with the heart.<sup>217</sup> This same tendency Kivelson notes in magic spells—for strong emotional feeling to manifest in the eyes, hearts and *utroba* of the body—is found in seventeenth-century poetic rhetoric. Again, this is certainly not a seventeenth-century innovation. The history of the *utroba*, alongside the heart, as an emotionalised body part in Kyivan and Muscovite literature traces its origins, as with the rest of Europe, to the Bible, and can be found in locally authored texts from the late eleventh century or early twelfth centuries (see Table 6, example 1). The innovation of the Baroque poets is not the use of the imagery itself, which had been current in Slavonic Orthodox culture for centuries, but the novel figurative use of this imagery as metaphor and emblem for parental love. As this chapter explores, the transformation of signification of the *utroba* in Baroque literary production carries substantial implications for the seventeenth-century imagining of motherhood.

As this thesis has made clear, the word *utroba* is hard to translate, as it does not express a single organ, but is a general non-gender-specific term referring to the ‘inner parts’ of a person, covering a range of internal organs which in modern terminology are quite distinct, including belly, bowels, womb, gut and stomach. Its meaning is broadly context-specific, varying from text to text (medical, biblical, etc), although reconstructing a precise meaning even within the context of a single text can be challenging. In medieval and early modern East Slavonic cultures, in a similar way to other European cultures, the *utroba* was thought to be the seat of compassionate or tender feeling. Traces of this can be seen in the Old Slavonic words for compassion—*blagoutrobie* (lit. ‘having a merciful *utroba*’ - a calque of the Greek word *efsplanchnía*), an equivalent to the word *miloserdie* (lit. tender or merciful-heartedness).

The *utroba* as a cultural symbol expressing compassion or tender feeling has largely disappeared from the modern Belarusian, Russian and Ukrainian languages, in a similar way as the notion of ‘bowels of compassion’ has from English. Today, the primary

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<sup>216</sup> Kivelson, ‘Distributed Personhood and Extruded Selves’, p. 19.

<sup>217</sup> Kivelson, ‘Distributed Personhood and Extruded Selves’, p. 10, 13-14.

meaning of this word is anatomical and gendered, meaning womb.<sup>218</sup> However, in pre-modern Slavonic literature, the *utroba* did not signify in a singular way. As an emotionalised body part, it was not gender specific and could be applied to both male and female bodies. A few examples from key Kyivan and Muscovite literary and religious texts demonstrate this well:

| <b>Table 6. Examples of the <i>utroba</i> used to express compassion in Kyivan and Muscovite literature</b> |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| <b>(1)</b>  | <b>The Life of Feodosii Pecherskii (11th century)</b>           | Чада моя любимая и братия!<br>Се бо и утробою вся вы<br>цѣлюю, яко отхожю къ<br>Владыцѣ, Господу нашему<br>Исус Христу <sup>219</sup> | My beloved children and<br>brothers! I greet/kiss you all<br>with my utroba as I am<br>leaving to meet the Lord our<br>God Jesus Christ |
| <b>(2)</b>  | <b>The Life of Sergii Radonezhskii (14th century)</b>           | Тот бо весть сердца и<br>утробы <sup>220</sup>  | For He [the Lord] knows<br>[our] hearts and utrobas   |
| <b>(3)</b>  | <b><i>Plach Evdokii Donskoi</i> (14th century)</b>              | Почто не промолвиши ко мне,<br>оутроба моя, к жене своей? <sup>221</sup>  | Why do you not speak to me,<br>my utroba, to your wife?   |
| <b>(4)</b>  | <b><i>Plach Bogoroditsy in the Orthodox Liturgy on Good</i></b> | О страшном Твоем рождестве<br>и странном, Сыне Мой, паче<br>всех матерей возвеличена бых  | Through your awesome and<br>strange birth, My son, I was<br>lifted above all other mothers;   |

<sup>218</sup> In Belarusian, an equivalent word ‘vantroba’ now means liver. In English, the New Testament Greek was rendered as ‘bowels’, which now exclusively refers to the intestines, having also lost any connotation with compassion.

<sup>219</sup> ‘Zhitie Feodosiia Pecherskogo’, ed. by O. V. Tvorogov, in *BLDR*, vol. 1, p. 430.

<sup>220</sup> ‘Zhitie Sergiia Radonezhskogo’, ed. by D. M. Bulanin and M. F. Antonova, in *BLDR*, vol. 6, ed. by D. S. Lihkachev, L. A. Dmitriev, A. A. Alekseev and N. V. Ponyrko (Saint Petersburg: Nauka, 1999), p.318. This is a reference to Psalms 7:10 and Psalms 25:2.

<sup>221</sup> *Novogorodskaia chetvertaia letopis’*, ed. by F. I. Pokrovskii and A. A. Shakhmatov, in *PSRL*, vol. 4 (2) (Leningrad: Izdatel’svo akademii nauk SSSR, 1925), col. 358. K. Shambinyi, A.A. Shakhmatov, G. M. Prokhorov and A. V. Solov’ev considered this text to have been written at the end of the fourteenth century or the beginning of the fifteenth century. V. P. Adrianova-Perets places it in the first half of the fifteenth century, and M. A. Salmina towards the sixteenth century.



|  |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
|  | <b>Friday (attributed to Symeon Metaphrastes, 10th century)</b> | Аз: но увы Мне, ныне Тя видящи на древе, распалаюся утробою. | but alas, now I see you on the tree, my utroba burns. |
|--|---|--|---|

In all of these examples, the *utroba* seems to function in a similar way to the heart, i.e the locus of emotion: it appears to be the centre of Feodosii's fond affection for his brothers; it is listed together with the heart as the site of the true character of a person; it serves as an epithet for a loved person (husband), in a similar way as someone might say 'my heart'; and it is described as wounded to express the hurt and loss suffered by the Mother of God. These examples demonstrate the ambiguity of the *utroba* and the difficulty of connecting the term with a specific organ. The term *utroba* could be used to express love between a range of people; brothers, husband and wife, as well as a mother and son, and is not exclusively associated with the maternal body.

In the seventeenth century, the ambiguity and resultant symbolic wealth of the *utroba* was exploited in Baroque poetry about family relations, along with the heart and eyes. This happened through the harnessing of pre-existing meanings of the *utroba* in Muscovite literary culture and, firstly, their transplantation into new contexts such as poetry about the family, and secondly, their combination into new figurative images of motherhood. For instance, prior to the seventeenth century the compassionate *utroba* is typically found in the context of the lament, which is arguably one of Kyivan and Muscovite Rus' most emotional genres and one of few lyric genres before the 1600s. Most famously, perhaps, it is included in the *Plach Bogoroditsy (Lament of the Mother of God)* which is sung in the Orthodox liturgy on Good Friday (see Table 6, example 4). In this extract, the *utroba* as the source of compassion is used by the hymnographer to contrast Mary's joy at Christ's birth and her pain at his loss.<sup>222</sup> In seventeenth century

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<sup>222</sup> The Mother of God, of course, was not supposed to have felt pain in childbirth as other mothers, and this tension between her spiritual and human identities posed a range of challenges to medieval theologians, writers and artists when depicting her maternal role and relationship with Christ. In medieval Western Europe a strong devotional tradition developed around the theme of Mary's sorrow at the Crucifixion. The Virgin's grief was understood as evidence of both her humanity and her spiritual sacrifice and was sometimes (from the thirteenth century onwards) represented as a second labour—paralleling Christ's Passion—whereby through her agony of compassion she brought forth the sons and daughters of the Christian Church. On the connection between Mary's sorrow and childbirth in the medieval Western tradition see Amy Neff, 'The Pain of *Compassio*: Mary's Labor at the Foot of the Cross', *The Art Bulletin*, 80.2 (1998), 254-273; Harvey E. Hamburg, 'The Problem of Lo Spasimo of

Muscovite poetry about maternity, as I show in this chapter, sorrow and suffering mark not only individual moments of the birth or death of a child but constitute the identity of the mother throughout life, as the pain she undergoes in childbirth is cast as a general symbol of maternal love and compassion. Key to this new representation of motherhood is the re-imagining of the symbolic potential of the *utroba*. The poetic mode extends the cultural significance of the ‘compassionate *utroba*’ beyond the narrow liturgical and literary categories it inhabited prior, endowing it with cultural currency as a gendered symbol of loving sacrifice and consolidating a gendered image of parental care.

## 2. Parental love as patriarchal authority in the *Domostroi*

Although the *Domostroi*, the *Poslanie k materem* and the *Poslanie ot syna ko svoemu ottsu* employ the same words for parental love—*liubov*’ (love), or occasionally *chadoliubie* (love of children)—a comparative survey reveals that this limited range of vocabulary is associated with a range of emotional codes in these texts. The *Domostroi* constructs the family as a microcosm of wider structures of dominance and subservience operating in Muscovite society, with the father assuming the role of both priest and ruler and the mother, children and slaves being his subjects. Accordingly, the household handbook represents the father’s emotional relationship with his wife, children and slaves in more detail than that of any other family relationship. This means that despite the fact that the *Domostroi* often refers to the ‘father and mother’ or ‘parents’ as a unit—such as in the following example: ‘vy zhe, chada, delom” i slovom” ugozhdaite roditelem” svoim”’ (And you, children, should please your parents in word and deed)—there is never a clear distinction made between the father-child and mother-child relationships.<sup>223</sup> The

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the Virgin in Cinquecento Paintings of the Descent from the Cross, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 12.4 (1981), 45-75. On lament in the medieval Orthodox world see: M. Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974) and ‘The Lament of the Virgin in Byzantine Literature and Modern Greek Folk-Song,’ *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 1 (1975), 111-40; G. L. Kustas, *Studies in Byzantine Rhetoric* (Thessaloniki: Patriarchal Institute for Patristic Studies, 1973); H. Maguire, ‘The Depiction of Sorrow in Middle Byzantine Art,’ *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 31 (1977), 123-174 and *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981).

<sup>223</sup> ‘Domostroi’, ed. by V. V. Kolesov, in *BLDR*, vol. 10, ed. by D. S. Lihachev, L. A. Dmitriev, A. A. Alekseev and N. V. Ponyrko (Saint Petersburg: Nauka, 2000), p. 134. Edition follows manuscript PHБ, Q. XVII. 149.

mother is not granted emotional autonomy in the text as an entity separate from the father, and in effect acts as a ‘silent partner’ within the parental unit.

Table 7 below demonstrates this through tracking the usage of the word ‘love’ between family members in the *Domostroi* and considering what actions, emotions and behaviours this word is associated with. The aim is not to provide an exhaustive definition of ‘love’ in the *Domostroi*, which would not be possible, but simply to engage this word as one comparative metric that can be used to track shifts in the gendering of emotional rhetoric. The table reveals that parental love is synonymous with the father’s love. The father is consistently the subject of the verb ‘to love’, whereas the mother never is. The verb *liubiti* cannot be separated from the assertion of the father’s authority over those below him in the family hierarchy.

First it is important to make a distinction between the family and the household. In the *Domostroi*, the *household* is the primary emotional unit, *not* the family. Bodily connections between family members—such as references to blood relations, childbirth, breastfeeding and so on—are absent in the text and do not form the basis of distinct emotional relationships in the household. Note, for example, the identical formula used to express the father’s love for his wife and for his workers or slaves when they complete their work with care: *liubiti i zhalovati* (3, 4, 8). No clear distinction is being made between the father’s emotional attitude towards his wife, his children or his slaves. The father displays the same emotions towards his wife and children as to anyone below him in the social hierarchy; junior boyars, slaves, and the poor. Paternal love is consistently expressed through authoritative, disciplinary behaviour. This lexicon of patriarchal love is associated with particular words and phrases such as *(po)uchiti* (to teach), *nakazati/nakazyvati* (to instruct and/or chastise), *zhaleti/zhalovati* (to pity; to forgive), *rany vozlagati* (to beat), *polzovati strakhom*<sup>224</sup> (to employ fear). Children display the same emotional attitude to the father as to any figure of male authority—spiritual father or ruler—characterised by words and phrases such as *(po)slushati* (to listen), *povinovatisia* (to obey), *nakazanie s liuboviiu priimati* (to receive instruction/discipline with love), *so strakhom prikhoditi* (to come before[him]in fear/with respect).

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<sup>224</sup> ‘*Strakh*’, here, means fear in the sense of respect or awe, as in the concept ‘god-fearing’.

**Table 7. Occurrences of *liubiti* (and variants thereof) in descriptions of familial emotions in the *Domostroi***

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| FAMILIAL RELATIONS:  |   |   |
| <b>Husband to wife</b>   |   |   |
| (1) <b>Ch. 14</b> <sup>225</sup> Како чтити детемъ<br>отцовъ своихъ духовныхъ и<br>повиноватися имъ<br><i>How children should honour their<br/>spiritual fathers and obey them</i>   | ... советовати с нимъ часто о житии полезномъ<br>... и како учити и любити мужу жена своя и<br>чада, а жене мужа своего слушати и<br>спрашиватися по вся дни. <sup>226</sup>  | <i>And seek [the spiritual father's] advice often...and<br/>consult with him [the spiritual father] often about how<br/>to live well...about how a man should teach and love his<br/>wife and children, and a wife should listen to her<br/>husband, and consult with him every day.</i>        |
| (2) <b>Ch. 29</b> Поучати мужу своя жена,<br>какъ Богу угодити и мужу<br>своему уноровити, и как домъ<br>свой добре строити, и вся<br>домашняя порядня и рукоделье<br>всякое знать, и слугъ учить и<br>самой делать<br><i>How a husband should teach his<br/>wife to please God and become</i> | Подобаеть поучити мужемъ женъ своихъ с<br>любовию и благоразсуднымъ наказаниемъ,<br>жены мужей своихъ вопрошают о всякомъ<br>благочинии, како душа спасти, Богу и мужу<br>угодити, и домъ свой добре строити, и во всемъ<br>ему покарятися <sup>227</sup> | <i>It befits men to teach their wives with love and<br/>considered instruction, and wives to ask their husband<br/>about proper decorum, about how to save their souls,<br/>how to please God and their husbands, and how to run<br/>their households and obey their husbands in everything</i> |

<sup>225</sup> All chapter references follow 'Domostroi', ed. by V. V. Kolesov, in *BLDR*, vol. 10 (Saint Petersburg: Nauka, 2000).

<sup>226</sup> 'Domostroi', p. 130.

<sup>227</sup> 'Domostroi', p. 150.

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <i>accustomed to her husband, how she should organise the household and know everything about household order and handiwork, how to teach the slaves and how to work herself</i> |   |  |
| (3) <b>Ch. 38</b> Какъ избная парядня устроити хорошо и чисто<br><i>How to create cleanliness and order in one's house</i>   | аще внимает — и по тому все творити и любити, и жаловати, аще жена по тому научению и наказанию не живетъ...ино достойть мужу жена своя наказывати, и ползовати страхом наедине и, понаказав, и пожаловати, и примолвити, и любовию наказывати <sup>228</sup> | <i>And if she understands, and does everything accordingly, then she should be loved and forgiven but if she doesn't live by these teachings and instructions... then it is proper for the husband to instruct his wife imparting fear on her in private, and having instructed her thus, should forgive her, and reproach her, and instruct her with love</i> |
| (4) Послание и наказание ото отца к сыну<br><i>Letter and instruction from father to son</i>   | Наказуй наедине, да наказавъ примолви и жалуй и люби ея, тако же и детей и домочатцовъ своихъ учи страху Божию и всякимъ добрымъ деломъ, понеже тебе о нихъ отвѣтъ дати въ день Страшного суда. <sup>229</sup>  | <i>Instruct [your wife] in private, and having instructed her, chide her, and forgive her, and love her, and thus you should also teach your children and house-children the fear of God and every good deed, for you must answer for them when Judgement Day comes.</i>   |

<sup>228</sup> 'Domostroi', p. 166.

<sup>229</sup> 'Domostroi', p. 206.

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  |   |  |
| <b>Parents to children</b>   |   |  |
| <p>(5) <b>Ch. 15</b> Како детей своихъ<br/>воспитати во всякомъ наказании<br/>и страхе Божии<br/><i>How to raise your children in the<br/>teachings of the Lord and in fear of<br/>God</i></p> | <p>... любите ихъ и беречи, и страхомъ спасти,<br/>уча и наказуя и, разсужая, раны возлогати.<sup>230</sup></p>     | <p><i>...love them and care for them, and save them through<br/>fear, teaching and instructing and, within reason, laying<br/>wounds on them</i></p> |
| <p>(6) <b>Ch. 17</b> Како дети учить и<br/>страхомъ спасти<br/><i>How to teach your children and<br/>save them through fear</i></p>  | <p>Любя же сына своего, учащай ему раны<sup>231</sup></p>   | <p><i>Loving your son means beating him frequently</i></p>   |
| <b>Children to parents</b>   |   |  |
| <p>(7) <b>Ch. 18</b> Како детемъ отца и матери<br/>любить и беречи и повиноватися<br/>имъ и покорити ихъ во всемъ</p>  | <p>...любите отца своего и мать свою, и<br/>послушайте их, и повинуйтесь имъ по Бозѣ во<br/>всемъ<sup>232</sup></p> | <p><i>...love your father and mother and listen to them and<br/>obey them in everything according to God</i></p>                                     |

<sup>230</sup> 'Domostroi', p. 130.

<sup>231</sup> 'Domostroi', p. 132.

<sup>232</sup> 'Domostroi', p. 134.

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <i>How children should love their parents and care for them and obey them and console them about all things</i>   |  |  |
| <b>Father to servants and workers</b>   |  |  |
| <p>(8) <b>Ch. 58</b> На погребахъ и на ледникехъ, и в житницахъ, и в сушилехъ, и в онбарехъ, в конюшняхъ часто государю смотрити</p> <p><i>How the master should check the cellars, the iceboxes, the granaries, the smokehouses, the barns and the stables often</i></p> | <p>...а за доброе устройство и бжежение любити и жаловати, всячески доброму бы была честь, а худому гроза.<sup>233</sup></p> | <p><i>...love and forgive [your servants] for good done and care, the good should be honoured and the bad threatened</i></p> |

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<sup>233</sup> 'Domostroi', p. 194.

The exact meaning of the verb *nakazati/nakazyvati* (to instruct/chastise) is ambiguous in the *Domostroi*. This verb is often evoked in conjunction with punishment, as in extract 5 from Chapter 15 ('How to raise your children in the teachings of the Lord and in fear of God'), and seems in several cases to be synonymous with corporal punishment, or certainly with some form of discipline as can be seen in extract 3 from Chapter 38 ('How to create cleanliness and order in one's house'), where the husband is encouraged to 'instruct' his wife 'in private, using fear'. In the five examples in the table where the text uses the word love (*liubiti/liubov'*) to describe the husband's emotional relationship with his wife, three occur in the context of him disciplining her. The father's love for his children is understood similarly, as being synonymous with punishment (probably physical), as in extract 6 from Chapter 17 ('How to teach your children and save them through fear').

This system of love aligns with the text's envisioning of the broader Orthodox patriarchal hierarchy operating in Muscovite society, headed by God. In Chapter 23 ('How to heal Christians from illness and all sorts of woe'), the *Domostroi* explains how God, too, leads his flock to repentance and thus to salvation through punishment of their sins:

И благий человеколюбецъ Богъ не терпя в человецехъ такихъ злыхъ нравовъ и обычаевъ и всякихъ неподобныхъ делъ, якоже чадолюбивый отецъ скорбьми спасаетъ, и ко спасению приводит, показуя, и наказуетъ за премногия грехи наша<sup>234</sup>

*And God, virtuous lover of men, not being able to bear the evil mores, habits and actions of men, leads us to salvation, like a child-loving Father saves [his children] through woes, revealing, and instructing/chastising us for our many sins*

God's love as described here evokes the behaviour of the father in the *Domostroi*. The verb *nakazanie* appears to indicate punishment or chastisement (for one's sins) since it is

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<sup>234</sup> 'Domostroi', p. 144. This citation comes from the writings of John Chrysostom, as found in the *Izmaragd*.



evoked in the context of inflicting suffering or woe (*skorb*'). Earthly authority mimics divine authority in the *Domostroi*; the father is responsible for punishing his household out of love.

In the *Domostroi*, the household functions as an emotional microcosm of the rest of Orthodox Muscovite society. The same emotional signifiers, such as *skorb*' and *strakh* perform comparable disciplining and ordering functions in descriptions of other social relationships in the text. An analysis of these words demonstrates the co-dependence of social hierarchy and constructs of emotion. Take, for example, *skorb*', a difficult word to translate into English. As a noun it can mean suffering; misfortune; trial or grief; sadness; woe. This word is often used as an adjectival noun—*skorbnye*—to refer to a particular socio-economic group who are defined by their emotional state (their suffering, misery and wretchedness), such as in this extract from Chapter 7 ('How to honour the Tsar and Prince and obey them in everything and obey any leader'):

Старейшимъ себе честь воздавай и поклонение твори, среднихъ яко братию почитай, маломожных и скорбных любовь привечай, юнейших яко чада люби<sup>235</sup>

*Give honour to your elders and bow before them, respect those less senior as brothers, welcome with love the unfortunate and wretched/suffering, and love the most junior like children*

Here, the only people the father is advised to *love* are those younger and less fortunate than him, who are like children or 'wretched/suffering' (*skorbnye*). The father's emotional relationship with those junior to him and with his children (who he saves through inflicting *skorb*') is the same. Likewise, the children's emotional attitude to any male authority is the same as to their father. Take, for example, the following extract from Chapter 5 ('How children should honour their spiritual advisors'), which closely resembles advice to children on honouring their mother and father:

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<sup>235</sup> 'Domostroi', p. 122.

...наказание его с любовию приимати, и послушати его во всемъ и чтити его. И бейте челомъ пред нимъ ниско: онъ учитель нашъ и наставникъ, и имейте его со страхом и любовию к нему приходити<sup>236</sup>

*...receive his instruction with love and listen to everything he says and honour him. And prostrate yourself before him: he is our teacher and mentor, come to him with fear and love*

Again, the emotional signifiers for anyone expressing love in a position of inferiority are the same: *nakazanie s liuboviiu priimati* (to receive instruction/discipline with love), *(po)slushati* (to listen), *so strakhom prikhoditi* (to come before[him]in fear). The emotional structure at play in this text does not distinguish between family and other forms of social relation.

*Strakh Bozhii* (fear of God), like *skorb'*, is another key signifier in the emotional lexicon of patriarchal authority. In Chapter 23 ('How to heal Christians from illness and all sorts of woe'), the text equates the failure of the Christian to properly experience fear of God (*bezstrashie*) with failure to comply with social and moral norms (*beschinie*).

А кто безстрашенъ и бесчиненъ, страху Божию не имеетъ и воли Божии не творит, и закону християньского и отеческаго предания не хранит...<sup>237</sup>

*The one who is without fear of God and who goes against social/moral norms, who does not have the fear of God and does not do His will, and does not comply with the Christian law and the law of the land...*

The correct performance of the emotions *skorb'* and *strakh Bozhii* by the appropriate actors—the wife, children, social inferiors—is required to maintain social and moral order. Contravention of emotional propriety within the family, therefore, is a serious matter and corresponds to the punishments operating in wider Muscovite society. This is evidenced by a comparison of vocabulary used in the *Domostroi* to describe familial arguments with contemporary legal discourse. In her book *By Honour Bound*, Nancy

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<sup>236</sup> 'Domostroi', p. 130.

<sup>237</sup> 'Domostroi', p. 142.

Kollmann analyses the legal system which existed in Muscovy for protecting an individual's honour. Elements of the Muscovite legal vocabulary of honour and insult which Kollmann highlights recur in the *Domostroi*'s description of the emotional 'contract' between parents and children. Kollmann notes that one of the most serious ways of offending someone's honour was through verbal insult—entered in legal records as *lai*, or *bran*'—which could be litigated against.<sup>238</sup> The *Domostroi* equates filial love with honour and obedience, and as a result, an incorrect emotional attitude towards one's parents is expressed using the same language as for a legally-recognised verbal insult—*laet*' (to scold):

Аще ли кто злословить или оскорбляеть родителя своя или кленеть, или лаеть сий пред Богомъ грешень, отъ народа проклять<sup>239</sup>

*Anyone who says a bad word against their parents, or dishonours them, or curses or scolds them, they will have sinned against God, and will be cursed by the people.*

In this way, the discourse of emotionality in the *Domostroi* can be read as a codified language of social hierarchy. The use of particular emotional signifiers—*liubiti*, *skorb*', *strakh* and so on—reflect and constitutes the individual's position in the patriarchal system of social authority. The *Domostroi*'s main concern is to construct the family as a microcosm of the broader Muscovite hierarchical system. Therefore, it mobilises citations about parenthood and parental values from the Bible and from the Church Fathers with the primary aim of instilling clear hierarchical parameters of discipline and obedience among the subjects of the Muscovite ruler. The promotion of the master-servant or ruler-subject dynamic within the family overlooks the household relationships that fall outside of this, such as between slaves, children and mother.

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<sup>238</sup> Kollmann, *By Honor Bound*, p. 42.

<sup>239</sup> 'Domostroi', p. 134.

### 3. The suffering maternal body as metaphor in the *Poslanie k materem*

As V. N. Peretts noted all those years ago, parental values expressed in seventeenth-century poetry did not fundamentally change from those expressed in the *Domostroi*. What changed was how they were represented in relation to parental biology. What distinguishes the *Poslanie k materem* and the *Poslanie ot syna ko svoemu ottsu* from the *Domostroi* is a reconsideration of the metaphorical potential of the body in the expression of parental values. This tendency is typical of the Baroque, which capitalised on the contemporary European preoccupation with the inner workings of the human body and the educational and moral value of feelings, senses and emotion. Contemporaneous with *O chelovechestem*’s natural-philosophical explanation of the physical locations of emotions and morals within the body, the two *Poslaniia* exploit this connection between anatomy and morality in their use of figurative language. The way they do this is distinctly gendered.

In both these poems, maternal biological reproductive processes—childbirth and feeding, and in particular the suffering connected with these processes—are deployed as metaphors expressing generalised notions of parental compassion, sacrifice and protection. In the following section, I examine these early examples of the maternal body used as metaphor, and then in the final section I trace the development of the discourse of maternal suffering in the later poetry of Simeon of Polatsk, in which the suffering mother is transformed into an allegorical emblem of unconditional love.

Both the *Poslanie k materem* and the *Poslanie ot syna ko svoemu ottsu* follow the same basic structure, typical for epistles.<sup>240</sup> They open with a respectful address to the parent, as a figure of authority (*chelom udariaet*, ‘to bow low to the ground’; the standard respectful greeting used in petitions), and close with a typical blessing/prayer to God:

...и паки здравствуй, государь / государыня, о Христе!

Мы же хвалитися будем о пречистем его кресте

Во веки, аминь.<sup>241</sup>

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<sup>240</sup> Panchenko, *Russkaia stikhotvornaia kul'tura*, p. 66.

<sup>241</sup> Bylinin and Iliushin, eds., *Virshevaia Poeziia*, pp. 139, 143.

...and greetings once more, (sir/madam) to Christ!  
We will praise his most-pure cross.  
Forever, Amen.

Both poems contain relatively little in the way of narrative content, constituting in essence a panegyric to the parent which includes an extended humility *topos* and repeated requests for intercession and protection (*pokrovitel'stve*). In both poems, parents are rarely referred to individually, as in the *Domostroi*. Statements about parental virtues are usually made in the plural, and therefore are not explicitly gendered. However, the way that 'parents' are characterised emotionally diverges between the two poems. While both evoke a similar *range* of emotions in their appeals to mother and father—*pechal'* (sadness), *skorb'* (misery, affliction, suffering), *bolezn'* (pain), *radost'* (joy), *chadoliubie* (love of children), *materne liublenie/otecheskaia liubov'* (maternal/paternal love), *milost'* (mercy)—there are noticeable gendered differences in *how often* these emotions are evoked. Where *pechal'*, *skorb'* and *bolezn'* are attributed to 'parents' only once each in the *Poslanie ot syna ko svoemu ottsu*, these words referencing pain, suffering and sadness are attributed to the 'parents' a total of nineteen times in the *Poslanie k materem*. In the latter poem, the physical experience of pain in childbirth and the physical sacrifice that comes with breastfeeding a child is extended beyond the mother's body to embody the eternal emotional condition of *both* parents, always sacrificing themselves for their child. This happens through form—rhyming couplets—and rhetorical devices—the use of the heart as a metaphor which blurs the boundary between physical and emotional pain, allowing the father suffering with his heart to be aligned with the mother suffering in labour.

In order to give a broad overview of how concepts of parental love are both similar but also different from the *Domostroi* in the two *Poslaniia*, it is helpful to undertake an analogous survey to the one completed for the *Domostroi* of the emotional practices associated with the word love. This survey reveals a different and more varied set of behaviours and feelings that are involved in expressions of parental love (see Table 8 below).

| Table 8. Occurrences of <i>liubiti</i> (and variants thereof) in descriptions of familial emotions in the <i>Poslanie ot syna ko svoemu ottsu</i> and the <i>Poslanie k materem</i> |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| Familial relations  | Text   |  |
| Parents' love   | <i>Poslanie ot syna ko svoemu ottsu</i>  |  |
| (1)   | и егда с покорением к ним приидут,<br>тогда, все то забыв, любезне их примут<br>и к тому досаду их не воспоминают,<br>но своим чадолюбием покрывают <sup>242</sup>   | ...and when [the children] come to [the parents] in subjugation<br>[the parents], forgetting everything, receive them lovingly<br>And don't recall their dissatisfaction<br>But cover their children with love       |
|   | <i>Poslanie k materem</i>  |  |
| (2)   | Яди паки и пития сладкия, и богатство все суть тленна,<br>отцова же и матерня любовь к детям своим обещанна.<br>Всегда бо она абие о детях своих сердцем умирает,<br>и паки в самом рождении все матери смерти себе чают. <sup>243</sup> | Food, drink and riches are sweet but transient<br>The love of a mother and father to their children is unconditional.<br>For her heart is always dying for her children<br>And all mothers await death in childbirth |
| Father's love   | <i>Poslanie ot syna ko svoemu ottsu</i>  |  |

<sup>242</sup> Bylinin and Iliushin, eds., *Virshevaia Poeziia*, p. 141.

<sup>243</sup> Bylinin and Iliushin, eds., *Virshevaia Poeziia*, p. 147.

|                          |   |   |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| (3)                      | и да умяхчит господь жестокою мою сердечную ниву,<br>чтобы ми пред тобою, государем моим, быти покорливу<br>и ни в чем тебе, родителю моему, не досадливу,<br>но и паче твоей отческой любви востанливу <sup>244</sup>  | <i>Let God soften the field of my harsh heart<br/>So that I can subjugate myself to you<br/>And not disappoint you, my parent, in anything<br/>And renew your paternal love</i>   |
| <b>Mother's<br/>love</b> | <b><i>Poslanie k materem</i></b>  |   |
| (4)                      | И паки скорбь и болезнь едина у всех,<br>того ради у койждо матери будет во устех;<br>потом же паки на сердцах их положится,<br>онеже каяждо матери к своим детям чадолюбие зрится. <sup>245</sup>  | <i>And sorrow and suffering are one for all<br/>For this reason they are on every mother's lips<br/>And then they settle once more in their hearts<br/>Revealing the love every mother has for her children</i>                                     |
| (5)                      | Аще и не доходит до тебя мое, государыни, исправление,<br>но обаче все праведный твоя молитвы да покрывают<br>и от всякия напасти меня, грешнаго, закроют.<br>Преудивляюся вашему матернему к нам люблению<br>и нашему к вам злomu неразумному противлению <sup>246</sup> | <i>If news of my reform doesn't reach you, madam,<br/>Nonetheless let all your righteous prayers cover me<br/>And protect me, sinful one, from attack.<br/>I am amazed at your maternal love<br/>And at our evil unreasonable opposition to you</i> |
| (6)                      | Яди различный и пития гортань услаждают,  | <i>Food and drink are a delight for the throat</i>  |

<sup>244</sup> Bylinin and Iliushin, eds., *Virshevaia Poeziia*, p. 142.

<sup>245</sup> Bylinin and Iliushin, eds., *Virshevaia Poeziia*, p. 143.

<sup>246</sup> Bylinin and Iliushin, eds., *Virshevaia Poeziia*, p. 146.

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
|  | ни менее же того ваша матерня любви утешают. <sup>247</sup> | <i>So does your maternal love console us</i><br><i>Various food and drink sweeten the throat, no less than this does your</i><br><i>motherly love delight</i> |
|--|---|---|

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<sup>247</sup> Bylinin and Iliushin, eds., *Virshevaia Poeziia*, p. 147.



Although exhortations to the child to have respect for and submit to the parental figure persist, new emphasis is also placed on verbs that stress parental compassion, self-sacrifice, forgiveness and intercession: *pokryvati* (to cover; to protect, to intercede) *uteshati* (to console), *smerti chaiti* (to await death) and *serdtsem umirati* (to die in one's heart). In the *Domostroi*, the verb *pokryti/pokryvati* is used only with its literal meaning—'to cover'—of food, tables etc. In the seventeenth-century poems it is used with its metaphorical meaning 'to protect, to intercede, to have mercy'.

The noun *pokrovitel'stvo* has both a general and a specifically religious connotation. As well as being the Old Slavonic word for patronage, protection or intercession, it is also linked in Orthodox Slavonic culture specifically with The Feast of the Protection of the Mother of God (or Feast of the *Pokrov*, 1<sup>st</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> October). The *Pokrov* of Mother of God is the name given to her mantle (omophorion). The celebration of this feast arose in connection with an account of the early tenth-century miraculous appearance of the Virgin in the Church of Blachernai in Constantinople as recorded in the life of St. Andrew the Fool. According to this miracle story, the Mother of God prayed for the congregation of the Blachernai church when Constantinople was under siege. She extended her mantle to shelter the faithful gathered in the church. While not celebrated in Byzantium, this cult was introduced in Rus' in the eleventh or twelfth century and was lastingly popular in East Slavonic lands.<sup>248</sup> In this way, the protection shown by the parents in the *Poslanie ot syna ko svoemu ottsu* and *Poslanie k materem* is endowed with a sacred character, reminiscent of that shown by the Mother of God.

Parental suffering for and protection of their children, of course, are not new ideas. In fact, in their edition of the *Poslanie k materem*, Bylinin and Iliushin point out paraphrases from the *Domostroi* and its sources, the *Izmaragd* and books of the Old Testament (Song of Songs, and the deuterocanonical Sirach) on this topic. However, while utilising the same scriptural references and proverbs, the *Poslanie k materem* and the *Poslanie ot syna ko svoemu ottsu* employs them differently to the *Domostroi*. In these poems, parental suffering and protection of their children are represented not through practices of discipline and submission, but through the body as a metaphor. Specifically, as the next section of the chapter will show, these ideas are embodied in maternal bodily

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<sup>248</sup> Serhii Plokhyy, 'The Symbol of Little Russia: The Pokrova Icon and Early Modern Ukrainian Political Ideology', *Journal of Ukrainian Studies*, 17.1-2 (Summer-Winter, 1992), 174-175.

practices, in images of childbirth and feeding, and then are echoed in the suffering of emotionalised body parts (heart, *utroba*).

The *Domostroi* only once mentions suffering in childbirth. This is in Chapter 18, ('How children should love and care for their parents and obey them and comfort them in everything'), which is a reworked version of a passage from the *Izmaragd* and comes from the deuterocanonical Old Testament book Sirach 7:29-30 (known in Slavonic as the *Kniga Premudrosti Iisusa syna Sirakhova*). The text suggests that the parent-child relationship is inherently unequal, because a child cannot give birth to their parents and therefore can never suffer for their parents as their parents did for them. Where the *Domostroi* uses this idea to underscore the necessity of discipline and filial obedience, in the *Poslanie k materem* suffering in childbirth is brought to the fore as the preeminent symbol of parental love. In this poem, the maternal body functions as a metaphor representing both parents. It is used to compare them to God as creator, and as Christ who sacrificed himself to give eternal life to mankind.

**Table 9. Comparison of portrayals of suffering in childbirth in *Poslanie k materem* and *Domostroi***

***Domostroi*, Chapter 18:** Како детемъ отца и мати любити и беречи и повиноватися имъ и покоити их во всемъ (*How children should love their parents and care for them and obey them and console them about all things*)

Не забывайте труда матерня и отцова, яже о васъ болезноваша и печални быша, покойте старость ихъ и о нихъ белезуйте, якоже они о васъ. Не глаголи много: «Сотворихъ имъ добра одеяниемъ и пищею, и всякими потребами», но ни си свободи, симъ не можеша бо ея родити и тако ея болети, яко она о тебе; темъ же со страхомъ раболепно служити имъ, да и сами отъ Бога мзду примете и жизнь вечную наслѣдите, яко свершители заповеди его...<sup>249</sup>

*Don't forget the work your mother and father have done for you, how they suffered and were sad, soothe their old age and suffer for them, as they have for you. Don't say: 'I'll make sure they have good clothes and food, and meet all their needs', because in doing this you won't give birth to her, and will not suffer for her, as she did for you; you must slavishly serve them, and then you will receive reward from God and inherit eternal life, as you will have followed his commandments...*

<sup>249</sup> 'Domostroi', p. 134.

### *Poslanie k materem*

Подобало бы нам всегда вас, родителей своих, чтити  
и всеми сердцы нашими и душею вас любить.  
И мы болезней ваших и скорбей не воспоминаем  
и яко отнюд ни во что их себе полагаем.  
И рождаете нас в таковых своих скорбех и печалех,  
паки достойно бы нам писати на своих сердечных скрижалех.

[...]

И кто таковым вам, государием, долг может отдати,  
аще будет кому и все имение свое продати?  
И паки аще и всею силою учнет вам труды своя приносить,  
но не возможет вас, родителей, противу родити.  
Понеже яко родителie подобятся самому богу  
Иже всем нам милость свою дает по премногу,  
Понеже бог от небытия в бытие всю тварь приведе  
Тако и вам, родителем, велию честь предаде  
То и подобно тому же, яко и вы нас приводите  
И умножение рода во вселенную вводите<sup>250</sup>

*It is fitting for us to always honour you, our parents  
And to love you with all our hearts and souls.  
We do not remember your pain and anguish  
And we don't take them upon ourselves  
Yet you give birth to us in such anguish and sorrow,  
We should write this on the tablets of our heart  
[...]  
And who, sires, can pay back that debt  
Even if they were to sell everything they had?  
Again, even if we were to bring our labours to you with all of our strength  
it isn't possible for us to give birth to you in turn.  
For as parents, you resemble God himself  
Who bestows great mercy on us all*

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<sup>250</sup> Bylinin and Iliushin, eds., *Virshevaia Poeziia*, p. 146-147.

*For God brought all creatures from nothingness into being  
 And gave to you, parents, a great honour  
 For like Him, you bring us [into the world]  
 And introduce the multiplication of our kind into the universe*

Unlike the *Domostroi*, the *Poslanie* connects the parental role to God not through analogies of religious-moral hierarchy, but through the analogy of creation. Parents are celebrated not for their social duties of instruction and punishment of their children, but for the biological process of giving birth to them. The focus on childbirth fundamentally shifts the discourse on parenthood from the wider framework of hierarchical relationships operating within Muscovite society—to a distinct bond, symbolised by a biological connection.

The new focus on childbirth in the *Poslanie k materem* represents an alteration in the representation of the emotional connection between parent and child. In the *Domostroi*, parental suffering is designed to provoke obedience. Suffering places the parents above the child in a moral hierarchy and requires filial subservience (‘*you must slavishly serve them*’). The *Poslanie* constructs a completely different emotional relationship between parent and child around the same trope, a relationship characterised by compassion (‘*Yet you give birth to us in such anguish and sorrow/We should write this on the tablets of our heart*’). The pain of the mother has a corresponding physical effect on the body of the child, being etched onto the child’s heart. As the mother suffers in labour, the child feels this pain in their heart; emotional and physical suffering in the parent-child relationship are constructed in tandem.

The use of heart imagery in the *Poslanie k materem* and *Poslanie ot syna ko svoemu ottsu* is significant because the *Domostroi* never uses the heart to convey affectionate feeling or compassion for a family member, as is shown in Table 10 below. The analysis of the usage of the heart to express emotion in the *Domostroi* demonstrates that the heart is reserved exclusively for the father’s emotions and is never used to convey emotions of other family members, being reserved for vertical feelings oriented up the Muscovite social hierarchy towards God (see Table 10, examples 1, 3, 4, 5), or towards the Grand Prince (Table 10, example 7). It is also evoked as a receptacle for religious and moral truth (Table 10, examples 2, 8). In the singular example from the *Domostroi* where the heart is evoked in the context of family relations (Table 10, example 6), the father is

advised *not* to allow the heart as an organ of emotional feeling to interfere in his treatment (beating) of his family, implying that affective feeling is counter-productive to the process of paternal ‘instruction’.

**Table 10. References to the heart in the *Domostroi***

|     |   |   |
|-----|---|---|
| (1) | ...страхъ Божий всегда имей в сердца своемъ <sup>251</sup>  | <i>Always have the fear of God in your heart</i>  |
| (2) | Почитай часто божественное писание и влагай въ сердце себе на пользу <sup>252</sup>   | <i>Read the Holy Scripture often and place it into your heart for good use</i>  |
| (3) | Видель еси, чадо, како в житии семъ жихом во всякомъ благоговении и сътресе Божии и в простоте сердца и церковномъ прилежании со сътрахомъ, и божественнымъ писаниемъ пользующися всегда <sup>253</sup> | <i>Have you seen, child, how we have lived this life in veneration and with the fear of God and with a humbleness of heart and with fearful dedication to the church, always referring to the Holy Scripture</i>                                |
| (4) | Господа ради и пречистой Богородицы и великихъ чудотворцевъ, почитай себе с любовию и со вниманиемъ и напиши на сердца своемъ <sup>254</sup>  | <i>for the sake of the Lord and the Most-Pure Mother of God and the great miracle workers, read over them with love and attention and write them on your heart</i>  |
| (5) | ...и сокрушеннымъ сердцемъ исповедася, просяще отпущения грехомъ. <sup>255</sup>  | <i>...and, with a defeated heart repenting, asking for forgiveness of sins</i>  |
| (6) | А по всяку вину по уху ни по видению не бити, ни под серцо кулаком... хто с сердца или с кручины такъ бьетъ, многи притчи от того бывают: слепота и глухота, и руку и ногу вывихнуть... <sup>256</sup>  | <i>Do not for any reason punch [any member of your household] in the ears or in the eyes, or below the heart... he who beats from the heart or in anguish can cause great harm: blindness and deafness, the dislocation of an arm or leg...</i> |

<sup>251</sup> ‘Domostroi’, p. 120.

<sup>252</sup> ‘Domostroi’, p. 206.

<sup>253</sup> ‘Domostroi’, p. 208.

<sup>254</sup> ‘Domostroi’, p. 212.

<sup>255</sup> ‘Domostroi’, p. 124.

<sup>256</sup> ‘Domostroi’, p. 166.

|     |  |  |
|-----|--|--|
| (7) | В похвалу же добродеемъ князю своему<br>прияйте всемъ сердцемъ <sup>257</sup>  | <i>With praise to your benefactors receive<br/>your prince with all your heart</i>   |
| (8) | ...буди ревнитель правожительствующимъ, и<br>техъ делания написуй в сердца своемъ, и самъ<br>такъ ж твори <sup>258</sup> | <i>Strive to live like those who live according<br/>to truth, note down their deeds in your<br/>heart and act as they do</i> |

Note that examples 4 and 8 in Table 10 contain the same scriptural reference which occurs in the *Poslanie k materem*—'writing on the tablets of the heart'—which is a reference to Proverbs 3.3. In the *Domostroi*, the son should write his father's teaching onto his heart 'for the sake of the Lord and the Most-Pure Mother of God and the great miracle workers'. In the *Poslanie k materem*, by contrast, the son should write on the tablets of his heart because his parents suffered for him. In the *Domostroi*, the father's heart is the source of behaviours, feelings and practices of subservience. In examples 1 and 3 from Table 10, the heart is connected with fear of God (*strakh Bozhii*), in Table 10, example 3 with humbleness (*prostota*), veneration (*blagovenie*) and fearful dedication to the Church (*tserkovnoe prilezhanie so strakhom*), in Table 10, example 5 with contrition (*sokrushenym" serdtsem"*) and repentance (*prosiashche otpushcheniia grekhom"*) and in Table 10, example 7 with praising one's benefactors (*v pokhvalu zhe kniaziu*). What the father should feel is impossible to disassociate from his position in the vertical framework of authority: the Church, secular authority, and ultimately God.

In the seventeenth-century poems, by contrast, the heart is frequently cast as a metaphor for the love between parents and children, as demonstrated in Table 11 below:

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<sup>257</sup> 'Domostroi', p. 122.

<sup>258</sup> 'Domostroi', p. 122.

**Table 11. References to the heart that describe familial relations in the *Nakazanie nekoeo ottsa*, *Poslanie ot syna ko svoemu ottsu* and *Poslanie k materem***

|     |  |  |
|-----|--|--|
|     | <i>Nakazanie nekoeo ottsa</i>  |  |
| (1) | Да и аз многогрешный, отец твой, многое попечение о тебе имел,/ такожде всегда о тебе сердцем своим скорбел <sup>259</sup> | <i>And I, too, most sinful, your father, have shown you a lot of care, / and also have anguished for you with my heart</i> |
|     | <i>Poslanie ot syna ko svoemu ottsu</i>  |  |
| (3) | И паки всегда об них болезнуют и воздыхают,/ яко же ярем тяжек в сердцах своих вменяют. <sup>260</sup>                     | <i>And once again always feel pain and sigh for them, / as if carrying a heavy burden in their hearts</i>                  |
| (4) | Несть бо тацех сердоболее, яко же отцы да матери,/ -воистину, неложно сердечные приятели <sup>261</sup>                    | <i>For there are no people more heart-feeling than fathers and mothers, /the truest heart companions</i>                   |
| (5) | Вем бо, яко тебе, государю моему, многи досады сотвориш/ и сердце твое до конца раздражих. <sup>262</sup>                  | <i>For I know that I have often caused you displeasure, my lord / and irritated your heart to the upmost</i>               |
| (6) | И до смерти отцем своим и матерям досаждают/ и яко ножи сердца их распаляют. <sup>263</sup>                                | <i>And [children] disappoint their mothers and fathers until their dying day/ as if piercing their hearts with knives</i>  |
|     | <i>Poslanie k materem</i>  |  |
| (7) | Аще кто восхощет к матери своей писати,/ тем на радость и на умиление сердца да подвижут <sup>264</sup>                    | <i>For those who want to write to their mother/ and thus move her heart to joy and tenderness</i>                          |

<sup>259</sup> Bylinin and Iliushin, eds., *Virshevaia Poeziia*, p. 134.

<sup>260</sup> Bylinin and Iliushin, eds., *Virshevaia Poeziia*, p. 139.

<sup>261</sup> Bylinin and Iliushin, eds., *Virshevaia Poeziia*, p. 141.

<sup>262</sup> Bylinin and Iliushin, eds., *Virshevaia Poeziia*, p. 140.

<sup>263</sup> Bylinin and Iliushin, eds., *Virshevaia Poeziia*, p. 142.

<sup>264</sup> Bylinin and Iliushin, eds., *Virshevaia Poeziia*, p. 143.

|      |   |   |
|------|---|---|
| (8)  | Аще и в далном разстоянии с тобою,<br>государынею пребываем/<br>а сердцы нашими аки близ друг на друга<br>взираем <sup>265</sup>    | <i>Even when we are far apart, mistress, /<br/>it is like our hearts are close, gazing at<br/>one another</i>                               |
| (9)  | И то вам велия скорбь и печаль выну о нас<br>бывает/<br>и матерне ваше сердце о нас велми стужает. <sup>266</sup>                   | <i>And you always have great sorrow and<br/>sadness on our behalf/<br/>and your maternal heart grieves greatly<br/>for us</i>               |
| (10) | И матерне сердце твое благонравное<br>возвеселити,/<br>и благородную и благолюбивую душу твою<br>умилити. <sup>267</sup>            | <i>[I don't know how to] cheer your<br/>righteous heart, /<br/>and soften your noble and loving soul.</i>                                   |
| (11) | Паки вем, яко матерне сердце всегда по чадах<br>своих умирает/<br>и выну видети их очима желает. <sup>268</sup>                     | <i>And I also know that a mother's heart is<br/>always dying for her children/<br/>and she always desires to see them with<br/>her eyes</i> |
| (12) | Всегда бо она абие о детях своих сердцем<br>умирает,<br>и паки в самом рождении все матери смерти<br>себе чают. <sup>269</sup>      | <i>For her heart is always dying for her<br/>children<br/>And all mothers await death in childbirth</i>                                     |
| (13) | И великою досадою матерне твое сердце<br>раздражаю,/<br>паки не помяни, государыни моя, моей<br>неразумной грубости. <sup>270</sup> | <i>And [if once more] I irritate your<br/>maternal heart with disappointment, /<br/>do not heed my foolish rudeness, my lady</i>            |

In these examples, the emotional relationship between parent and child is represented as being within the heart—that is, physically inside the body. The result is that physical yearning and emotional feeling, and particularly physical and emotional suffering, become blurred. This has particular consequences for the mother, since the mother's heart is referenced most frequently (see Table 11 examples 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13). Through

<sup>265</sup> Bylinin and Iliushin, eds., *Virshevaia Poeziia*, p. 143.

<sup>266</sup> Bylinin and Iliushin, eds., *Virshevaia Poeziia*, p. 145.

<sup>267</sup> Bylinin and Iliushin, eds., *Virshevaia Poeziia*, p. 145.

<sup>268</sup> Bylinin and Iliushin, eds., *Virshevaia Poeziia*, p. 143.

<sup>269</sup> Bylinin and Iliushin, eds., *Virshevaia Poeziia*, p. 147.

<sup>270</sup> Bylinin and Iliushin, eds., *Virshevaia Poeziia*, p. 148.



metaphorical linkage with her suffering heart, the mother's physical experience of suffering in childbirth is cast as the epitome of parental love.

The figurative language of the two *Poslaniia* persistently blurs the biological and emotional connections between parent and child, imagining them both as corporal bonds, whether through the heart or the reproductive process. The following extract from the *Poslanie k materem* envisages the process of the mother feeding the child and the child growing into adulthood as the provision of emotional sustenance:

Егда мя, грешнаго, государыня моя, питала,  
Тогда многое попечение обо мне принимала.  
А егда же ныне мя своим сердечным радением возрастила,  
Обаче и тут сердца своего не возвеселила<sup>271</sup>

*When you, madam, fed me, the sinful one  
Then you bore great pains for me  
And now you have grown me with your heart's zeal  
However, you have not gladdened your heart by doing this*

As the medical and religious authorities of the time believed, the mother nurtures her child not only with milk, but also with her 'heart's zeal' (*'serdechnoe radenie'*). The biological process of breastfeeding becomes a metaphor for the growth of the emotional relationship between mother and child, the connection between biological and emotional consolidated in the use of rhyming couplets: *'pitala/popechenie prinimala'*; *'serdechnym radeniem vozrastila'/serdtse svoego ne vozveselila'*. Both sets of couplets frame the physical care provided by the mother for the child as an emotional sacrifice. Hence, ideas about parenthood in these poems are written onto the body simultaneously 'biologically' and also 'emotionally'. The consequences of the blurring of biological and emotional is that it allows for the 'emotionalisation' of the reproductive process. The use of heart imagery allows distinctly gendered experiences—pain in childbirth, breastfeeding—to become detached from the mother's body, symbolising familial love more generally. Consider, for example, extract 12 from Table 11 above:

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<sup>271</sup> Bylinin and Iliushin, eds., *Virshevaia Poeziia*, p. 145.

Яди паки и пития сладкия, и богатство все суть тленна,  
отцова же и матерня любовь к детям своим обещанна.  
Всегда бо она абие о детях своих сердцем умирает,  
и паки в самом рождении все матери смерти себе чают.<sup>272</sup>

*Food, drink and riches are sweet but transient*  
*The love of a mother and father to their children is unconditional.*  
*For her heart is always dying for her children*  
*And all mothers await death in childbirth*

In this extract, the use of rhyming couplets neatly links the emotional pain the mother experiences because of her children (suffering of the heart) and the physical pain she experiences in childbirth; both in fact are represented as the ultimate self-sacrifice—death. This pain—physical and emotional, blurred into one—is given as the proof of the fact that both a mother *and a father's* love is unconditional through the use of particle *bo* (for, because), indicating causality. Many things are happening here. Firstly, the experience of emotional feeling for your child is made integral to the biological process of childbirth. In other words, mothers are represented as being hardwired to love their children. Secondly, the analogy of heart suffering and suffering in birth enables the extension of this pain to the father. In other words, suffering in childbirth becomes a metaphor for a more abstract emotional feeling for one's children (readiness to sacrifice oneself for them). Thus, the gendered roots of parental suffering are manipulated in order to construct a universalised image of 'parental' sacrifice, incorporating both motherhood and fatherhood. Finally, the quatrain sets up these ideas in such a way as to position pain in childbirth as the foundation for all the ideas that come before it in the poem—such as emotional pain and unconditional love for the child. It is the mother's body upon which ideas of both motherhood and fatherhood are constructed.

This discursive strategy is prevalent not only in the *Poslanie k materem*, but also in its 'parent' poem, the *Nakazanie nekoego ottsa* (coined the 'Virshevyi Domostroi' by V. N. Peretts). At first glance, the following passage showcases clear parallels with

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<sup>272</sup> Bylinin and Iliushin, eds., *Virshevaia Poeziia*, p. 147.

*Domostroi*. It takes the form of a letter from a father to his son, strikingly similar to the letter from father to son which is included in the Silvestr redaction of the *Domostroi*. The father paraphrases instructions from the *Domostroi* and warns of the possibility of eternal damnation if the son doesn't heed his advice.

И аще послушаешь сего моего наказания,  
то не лишен будеши вечнаго упования.  
Аще ли преслушаеши сие мое к тебе учение,  
блюдися, яко да не постигнет тя вечное мучение  
[...]

И сия моя словеса напиши на сердечных своих скрижалех,  
Мати бо твоя родила тя в великих печалех,  
и всегда –нощию и днем о тебе скорбела  
и со всяким усердием велми о тебе болела  
Да и аз многрешный, отец твой, многое попечение о тебе имел,  
также всегда о тебе сердцем своим скорбел  
как бы тебя в добре и непорочне воспитати  
и, воспитав, доброму учению и разумению вдати.<sup>273</sup>

*And if you listen to this teaching of mine  
Eternal rest will not be withheld from you.  
If you do not listen to this teaching  
Mind, that eternal torture does not fall on you  
[...]  
Write these my words on the tablets of your heart  
for your mother gave birth to you in great sorrow  
and always, night and day, anguished for you  
and with zealousness suffered for your sake.  
And I, too, most sinful, your father, have shown you a lot of care  
And also have anguished for you with my heart,  
worrying how to bring you up well and virtuously*

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<sup>273</sup> Bylinin and Iliushin, eds., *Virshevaia Poeziia*, p. 134.

*and, having brought you up, how to give you good teaching and insight.*

The first quatrain reproduces the lexicon of patriarchal love encountered in the *Domostroi*. *Nakazanie* (instruction/chastising) is rhymed with *upovanie* (repose) and the failure to heed the father's *uchenie* (teaching) with *muchenie* (torture), consolidating the connection between discipline and salvation. Then, in the second stanza, reference to maternal suffering in childbirth once again becomes the symbolic basis for constructing familial love more broadly, both of the child for his parents and the father for his child. The emotional connection between the child and his parents is cemented through mutual suffering; the child's heart suffers (i.e. he feels compassion) for the mother's physical suffering in childbirth, and these two forms of suffering are aligned through the use of rhyming couplets—'*Na serdechnykh svoikh skrizhalekh*' ('*on the tablets of your heart*')—'*rodila tia v velikikh pechalekh*' ('*gave birth to you in great sorrow*'). On the basis of this foundation the poet expands the mother's physical pain over the following two lines beyond the single experience of pain in childbirth to incorporate general emotional concern—'*noshchiiu i dnem o tebe skorbela*' ('*night and day anguished for you*') rhyming with '*userdiem velmi o tebe bolela*' ('*with zealously suffered for your sake*'). The blurring of physical and emotional pain in these lines again allows for the motif of parental sacrifice to be extended to the father, who suffers with his heart, through the use of the same verb *skorbeti* (to anguish, suffer).

The metaphorical use of the heart enables the mother's gendered biological experiences—breastfeeding and childbirth—to be cast as a universal parental quality: self-sacrifice. Simultaneously, however, the blurring of emotional and physical experience means that the mother's physical pain in reproduction, and, relatedly, her reproductive body itself, encapsulate her love for her child.

Not only does the *Poslanie k materem* use the maternal heart and maternal breastfeeding as motifs to construct parental love as a form of sacrifice, but also the maternal *utroba* to construct parents as intercessors or protectors of their children. As discussed in the introduction, the *utroba* already existed in Orthodox literary culture as an emotionalised body part and was considered to be the seat of compassion or tender feeling, in a not dissimilar way to the heart. The *utroba* as an epithet signifying love or affection, or the image of the suffering *utroba* signifying grief could be applied to both

men and women. The *Poslanie k materem* exploits this pre-existing cultural trope in order to construct the maternal *utroba* as a metaphor of parental protection.

The verb *pokryti/pokryvati* (to cover; to intercede) is used three times in the *Poslanie ot syna ko svoemu ottsu*, with three different objects: *blagoutrobie* (compassion, tender-heartedness), *shchedrota* (generosity) and *chadoliubie* (love for children). In the *Poslanie k materem*, the verb is used twice, with *pravednyyi molitvy* (righteous prayers) and *milost'* (mercy). In each case, the parents are literally ‘covering’ or ‘wrapping’ their child in compassion, generosity, love, prayers and mercy respectively, just as the Mother of God covered the faithful with her omophorion, thus protecting them from evil. However, appeals to parental intercession diverge along gendered lines in the *Poslanie ot syna ko svoemu ottsu* and the *Poslanie k materem*. As Table 12 illustrates, when the son appeals to his mother’s compassion to protect him, the source of this compassion and protection is constructed as a physical location in her body, the maternal *utroba*:

| <b>Table 12. References to the <i>utroba</i> in the <i>Poslanie ot syna ko svoemu ottsu</i> and <i>Poslanie k materem</i></b> |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| (1)   | Обаче надеюся на твое, государя моего, отчее<br>благоутробие,<br>да покрывши своим благоутробием мое<br>неудобие. <sup>274</sup> | <i>Yet I place my hope in yours, my master’s,<br/>fatherly compassion (<b>blagoutrobie</b>)<br/>That you will cover my inadequacy with<br/>your compassion (<b>blagoutrobie</b>)</i> |
| (2)   | И паки непрестая молю, молю матерню твою<br>утробу,<br>да покрывши своею милостию мою к тебе<br>злобу. <sup>275</sup>            | <i>And once more I pray ceaselessly, I pray<br/>to your maternal <b>utroba</b><br/>That you might cover my wickedness to you<br/>with your mercy</i>                                 |

Here, the mother’s *utroba* is positioned as analogous to the word *blagoutrobie*—a word meaning compassion (lit. ‘having a merciful *utroba*’). Both couplets are structured in parallel: each opens with an appeal or prayer to the father’s *blagoutrobie* and the maternal *utroba* respectively and ask that they might ‘cover’ the child with their compassion (‘*da pokryvshi svoim blagoutrobiem/da pokryvshi svoeiu milostiui*’). It is clear from the

<sup>274</sup> Bylinin and Iliushin, eds., *Virshevaia Poeziia*, p. 141.

<sup>275</sup> Bylinin and Iliushin, eds., *Virshevaia Poeziia*, p. 149.

formulation of both sentences that both parents perform the same function of protection and intercession on behalf of the child. However, whereas the son appeals abstractly to his father's compassion to protect him, in the case of his mother he appeals to a concrete part of her body.

In a similar way to the *Plach Bogoroditsy* (Table 6, p. 133) the *Poslanie k materem* plays on the dual meaning of the *utroba* as the place of origin of a child and as the source of compassion. However, it adds a new component. Removed from the context of a lament over the loss of a child and placed in the context of an appeal to maternal forgiveness, the maternal *utroba* becomes a symbol of maternal protection. The *Poslanie k materem* employs specifically religious lexicon—namely the use of ‘pray’ and ‘prayer’ and the verb *pokryti/pokryvati*—to construct the *utroba* as analogous to the *pokrov* of the Mother of God, protecting the children quite literally by ‘covering’ them. In this way, the sacred character of the Virgin's protection is extended to all mothers.<sup>276</sup>

In the construction of parental ideals in the *Poslanie k materem*, *Poslanie ot syna ko svoemu ottsu* and *Nakazanie ot nekoego ottsa*, the symbolic valence given to the maternal biological processes of childbirth and breastfeeding and to the maternal *utroba* has important consequences. Since the emotional-moral identity of the parent is attached to gendered physical experiences, these emotional-moral ideals also become gendered. Specifically, since parental compassion, sacrifice and protection are constructed with reference to the mother's body—her *utroba*, her physical suffering in childbirth and the sacrifice of her body in breastfeeding—these values are framed as natural and inherent to the mother in a way that they are not for the father. This is witnessed by the increased use of vocabulary connected to suffering, both emotional and physical, in the *Poslanie k materem*. as opposed to its counterpart poem, the *Poslanie ot syna ko svoemu ottsu*. As noted in the introduction to this section, while both epistles reference a similar range of emotions, the words *pechal'*, *skorb'* and *bolezn'* are attributed to the ‘parents’ in the

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<sup>276</sup> It seems plausible to link this poetic analogy of the *utroba* and the *pokrov* in the *Poslanie k materem* to the potentially broader trend which I tentatively identified in Chapter I towards the celebration and even sanctification of the maternal body and maternal biological processes in cultural production of the period. As mentioned in on p.59, icons of the Mother of God breastfeeding were becoming more prevalent in the mid-seventeenth century (one example being the *Mlekopitel'nitsa* iconography depicting the Mother of God breastfeeding). Although this thesis limits its analysis to literature, I suggest that it would be potentially very productive to undertake a comparative analysis of representations of the maternal body in poetry and across other cultural media of the period, such as iconography.

*Poslanie k materem* a total of nineteen times, compared to just once each in the *Poslanie ot syna ko svoemu ottsu*. The frequency of references to maternal pain in the letter addressed to the mother demonstrates that when the physical suffering of maternal body becomes symbolic of abstract religious ideals—compassion, sacrifice and protection—then these ideals sanctify, as well as justify and normalise gendered suffering.

#### 4. The suffering maternal body as allegorical emblem in Simeon of Polatsk's *Freny*

The discourse of maternal suffering in seventeenth-century poetic culture has a significance beyond immediate context of the family. In the final section of this chapter I consider the *Freny*, a series of poems from the court of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich, written by Simeon of Polatsk in 1669, in which political values, as well as parental values, are inscribed into the body of the mother. As in the *SK*, gender, parenthood and rulership are constructed in tandem, but this happens in Simeon's poem through the construction of motherhood as opposed to fatherhood. Simeon legitimises the Tsar's power through the association of motherhood with sacrifice and subjugation. The maternal body in pain is developed from a series of metaphors expressing parental care into an allegorical emblem of sacrificial love that is used to comment on the current socio-political situation in Muscovite State. Simeon's *Freny* illuminates the growing cultural value of this particularly gendered image of Christian love—as maternal suffering—in seventeenth-century Muscovite culture.

Simeon of Polatsk is widely considered by scholars of Muscovite literature to be one of the early representatives of Baroque writing in Muscovy, as well as one of the first composers of syllabic poetry in the Russian language. Born in 1629 in Polatsk, then part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (today's Belarus), Simeon studied at the Kyiv Mohyla Academy under the tutelage of Lazar Baranovych. He arrived in Moscow in 1664 as court poet to Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich, becoming a tutor to the royal children in 1667. Simeon composed poetry, sermons and plays in both Polish and Russian on a range of themes. Examples of his more explicitly religious works include the *Obed Dushevnyi* (*Spiritual Lunch*) and *Vecheria Dushevnaia* (*Spiritual Supper*) both collections of homilies published after his death (1681-1683), and the *Psaltyr' Rifmotvornaia* (*Psalter*

in Verse, 1680), a poetic rendering of the Psalter. Most famously, perhaps, he wrote the encyclopaedic collection of moral verse the *Vertograd mnogotsvetnyi* (*The Blossoming Garden*, 1677-1678).<sup>277</sup> While at the Muscovite court Simeon also wrote a series of ceremonial poems celebrating important occasions in the life of the ruling family, known collectively by scholars today as the *Rifmologion*. This included celebrations of births, marriages and important feast days, greetings on the occasion of the Tsar's return home to court, as well as laments and consolations on the occasion of dynastic deaths.<sup>278</sup>

Simeon's *Freny* is a series of laments from the royal family and Muscovite society that he wrote on the occasion of the death of the Tsaritsa Mariia Ilichna, wife of Aleksei Mikhailovich, who died in 1669 during childbirth. In the *Freny*, each lament is followed by an *uteshenie* (consolation) from a different virtue, which essentially form a series of panegyrics to the Tsaritsa outlining her merits and good deeds in life. Simeon also includes a final testament from Mariia from beyond the grave. Although I do refer at points to several of the laments and to Mariia's final testament, I focus particularly on the twelfth and final lament: the *Plach' tserkve ratuiushchiia* (Lament of the Church in Conflict).

**Table 13. Order of laments in the *Freny ili Plachi vsekhn sanov i chinov pravoslavnorossiiskogo tsarstva o smerti Blagovernia i Khristoliubivya Gosudaryni Tsaritsy i Velikiia Kniagini Marii Ilichny* (from the *Rifmologion*, 1669)**

| Introductory address from Simeon of Polatsk to Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich   |  |
|--|--|
| Lament   | Poem of consolation                            |
| 1) The Tsar<br><i>Fren, ili Plach' pervyi Blagochestiveishago Tishaishago Samoderzhavneishago Velikago Gosudaria Tsaria i Velikago Kniazia Aleksia</i> | Faith<br><i>Paraklisis, ili uteshenie very</i> |

<sup>277</sup> See Chapter I, '(De)constructing sex in Muscovy', p.50

<sup>278</sup> For more information on Simeon of Polatsk's life, work and innovative poetic style, see Kahn, Naumovich, Lipovetskii and Sandler, 'Poets' in *A History of Russian Literature*, pp. 160-178; Anthony R. Hippisley, *The Poetic Style of Simeon Polotsky* (Birmingham: Department of Russian Language and Literature, University of Birmingham, 1985); A. N. Robinson, ed., *Simeon Polotskii i ego knigoizdatel'skaia deiatel'nost'*, (Moscow: Nauka, 1982).



|   |  |
|---|--|
| <i>Mikhailovicha Vseia Velikiia i Malyia i Belyia Rossii Samoderzhitsa</i>  |  |
| 2) The royal children<br><i>Plach' vtoryi presvetlago lika chad Tsarskikh</i>   | Hope<br><i>Uteshenie nadezhdy</i>                                    |
| 3) The Tsar's sisters<br><i>Plach' tretii blagorodnykh Tsareven</i>   | Love<br><i>Uteshenie liubve</i>                                      |
| 4) The clergy<br><i>Plach' chetvertyi vsego China dukhovnago</i>  | Devotion<br><i>Uteshenie blagogoveinstva</i>                         |
| 5) The Senate<br><i>Plach' piatyi vsego presvetlago Sigklita</i>  | Wisdom<br><i>Uteshenie mudrosti</i>                                  |
| 6) The monasteries of the Russian kingdom<br><i>Plach' shesty vsek sviatykh obitelei Velikorossiiskogo tsarstva</i>             | Abstinence<br><i>Uteshenie vozderzhaniia</i>                         |
| 7) All the Orthodox military<br><i>Plach' sedmyi vsego pravoslago voinstva</i>  | Peace<br><i>Uteshenie mira</i>                                       |
| 8) The towns of the pious Great-Russian dominion<br><i>Plach' osmyi vsek gradov blagochestivyiia Veliko-Rossiiskii derzhavy</i> | Intercession<br><i>Uteshenie zastupleniia</i>                        |
| 9) Wanderers and hermits<br><i>Plach' deviatyi strannykh i prisheltsov</i>  | Hospitality<br><i>Uteshenie strannoliubiia</i>                       |
| 10) The poor, widows and orphans<br><i>Plach' desiatyi vsek nishchikh, vdovits i sirykh</i>                                     | Charity<br><i>Uteshenie milostyni</i>                                |
| 11) The Russian kingdom<br><i>Plach' pervyi nadesiat' vsego pravoslavnago tsarstviia Rossiiskago</i>                            | All the virtues<br><i>Uteshenie vsek dobrodeteli</i>                 |
| 12) The Church in conflict<br><i>Plach' vtoryi nadesiat' Tserkve ratuiushchiia (hereafter Plach' tserkve ratiuiushchiia)</i>    | The glorified Church<br><i>Uteshenie Tserkvi torzhestvuiushchiia</i> |

|  |
|--|
| <p>Last testament of the Blessed Lady Tsaritsa and Grand Princess Mariia Ilichna from the grave to those left behind</p> <p><i>Slovo posledniago tselovaniia Blagovernia Gosudaryni Tsaritsi i Velikiia Kniagini Marii Ilichny ot groba k ostavshim</i> (hereafter <i>Slovo posledniago tselovaniia</i>)</p> |
| <p>Series of nine emblems</p>  |

In the *Plach' tserkve ratuiushchiia*, Simeon's exploration of maternal embodiment is not a commentary on parental values. He extends the symbolic potential of the maternal body through the use of emblem, constructing the maternal *utroba/chrevo*<sup>279</sup> as a multivalent allegorical image through which he presents an exegesis on eschatology, a commentary on the relationship between Tsar and Tsaritsa and a commentary on the relationship of Church and State during the *Raskol* (Church schism of 1650s-1680s).

The *Raskol* in the Muscovite Orthodox Church was connected to the reforms of Patriarch Nikon, who in the 1650s proposed changes to the Muscovite church service books with the aim of bringing the rites and rituals into line with those of the Greek Orthodox Church. Nikon's reforms, however, faced significant opposition from those who would later come to be known as 'Old Believers'. Over the course of the next few decades, up until the 1680s, the reforms were ratified at a series of church councils. Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich actively supported the reforms, and it was by his order that one of the most significant of the church councils, the Great Moscow Synod, was convened in 1666-1667, just two years before Simeon's poem was composed. At this council, those who opposed reform were officially labelled heretics, excommunicated and the leaders of the opposition imprisoned or exiled.<sup>280</sup>

<sup>279</sup> Simeon uses both the words *chrevo* and *utroba* in the *Plach' tserkve ratuiushchiia*, both in the context of childbirth and maternity, and there is no clear difference in usage between the two terms.

<sup>280</sup> Paul Meyendorff, *Russia, Ritual, and Reform: The Liturgical Reforms of Nikon in the 17th Century*, (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991), pp. 66-68.

#### 4.1 The embodiment of meaning and the meaning of embodiment in Simeon's work

The Baroque is a cultural movement particularly associated with the expression of abstract meaning via reference to the material world; through feeling, the senses and embodiment.<sup>281</sup> In a recent paper Fedor Maksimishin considers the significance of images of dismembered body parts in Muscovite Baroque culture through Karion Istomin's *Litsevoi bukvar* (alphabetic primer) of 1694, which uses bodies and body parts to represent each letter of the alphabet.<sup>282</sup> He places Istomin's fragmented body parts in a broader context of the growing cultural interest in 'dissection' in late-seventeenth century Muscovy, that would culminate in Peter's reforms of the Muscovite body in the early eighteenth century.<sup>283</sup> This context included the icon painter Simeon Ushakov's proposed 'anatomical atlas' with separate pages for each body part, and also encompassed the rise of grammar as a discipline, which allowed language to be broken down into its constituent parts. Maksimishin suggests that Istomin's primer offered 'a new way to think about the body by allowing [readers] to see it not as a sealed whole, but rather as an assemblage of fragments that could be rearranged in a fashion similar to how letters of the alphabet could be recombined into different words.'<sup>284</sup> This same impulse to express meaning through the human body and its fragmentation is observable in Simeon's poetry; in this case, it manifests in his figurative use of the body and its parts as emblematic symbols.

The emblem, composed of an inscription or motto (usually a proverb or biblical citation), a picture, and a short poem, relies on the symbolic connection between the three elements, which when read together express a compositional and ideological unity of meaning from which the reader is expected to draw a moral lesson. Simeon of Polatsk is known for his composition of the earliest emblems and emblematic poetry in Russian

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<sup>281</sup> Or, as Kahn, Naumovich, Lipovetskii and Sandler put it, 'making the intangible tangible'. 'Poets', in *A History of Russian Literature*, p. 174. See also Monika Kaup, 'Feeling Baroque in Art and Neuroscience: Joy, Sadness, Pride and a Spinozist Solution to the Quest for Happiness', in *Emotion and the Seduction of the Senses, Baroque to Neo-Baroque*, ed. by Lisa Beaven and Angela Ndalianis, Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Culture series (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2018), p. 21.

<sup>282</sup> Fedor Maksimishin., 'Dismemberment as Means of Public Enlightenment. On One Aspect of Karion Istomin's Illustrated Primer', unpublished paper delivered at the Association for Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies conference (Boston, 6-9 December 2018).

<sup>283</sup> Maksimishin, 'Dismemberment as Means of Public Enlightenment', p. 1.

<sup>284</sup> Maksimishin, 'Dismemberment as Means of Public Enlightenment', p. 5.

culture, but no one yet has explicitly focused on his use of the body as emblem, and the significance of this for the construction of Muscovite gender ideals.

In his own surviving notes on poetics, the *Commendatio brevis Poeticae* (1646), Simeon quotes from the Jesuit scholar Jacobus Pontanus on the nature of an emblem but doesn't cite this passage exactly. Pontanus writes: an emblem...consists of three elements: an epigraph, which is like the soul of the whole thing, a picture, and a poem, related arts which explain each other in such a way that the one is the interpreter of the other. Simeon writes: 'The emblem...usually consists of three parts: the Inscription, which is, one could say, like the soul [of the emblem], the Picture, which is like the body, and the Poem' [...emblema...constant communiter tribus partibus: Inscriptione, quae est velute anima; Pictura, quae est velute corpus, et Poesis ].<sup>285</sup> This additional annotation on the part of the poet supports the idea, I argue, that Simeon considered the body an important vehicle for expressing meaning and may consciously have used the human body in the construction of emblems.

Anthony Hippisley notes that Simeon uses the emblematic form in two ways, as the pictorial-textual synthesis described above or as an exclusively textual emblem, where the written text itself forms the shape of an image. Both Hippisley and Lidiia Sazonova have observed that an 'emblematic style' saturates Simeon's work even where there does not *appear* to be an image at play in the making of symbolic meaning. Sazonova draws attention in particular to Simeon's reliance on iconographic imagery as the basis for his poetry, citing the poem *Mech* (sword) in the *Vertograd mnogotsvetnyi*, which is in essence an ekphrasis of the iconographic composition of the 'Mother of God with Seven Swords'.<sup>286</sup> The poem is a didactic tool to instruct the reader how to read and understand the iconographic image, and to control what reaction they should experience.

### Образ Богородицы, семь мечев имущий

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<sup>285</sup> Latin cited from Peter A. Rolland, 'Ut Poesia Pictura...: Emblems and Literary Pictorialism in Simiaon Polacki's Early Verse', *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, 16.1-2 (June 1992), 67-86. Manuscript source: RGADA, Sobr. Rukopisei mosk. Sinodalnoi tip. fond. 381. No. 179, fol. 14r. See also L. I. Sazonova, *Pamiat' kultury. Nasledie srednevekov'ia i barokko v russkoi literature novogo vremeni*, (Moscow: Rukopisnye pamiatniki drevnei Rusi, 2012), p. 133; and Hippisley, *The Poetic Style of Simeon Polotsky*, p. 37.

<sup>286</sup> Sazonova, *Literaturnaia kul'tura Rossii*, pp. 316-318. This image appeared in Muscovy only in the 1680s, probably emerging from Catholic Poland where it was widespread. See Sazonova, *Pamiat' kultury*, pp. 439-444.

в перси ея вонзенных, есть знаменающий  
Седмь болезней оных, яже пострадаше,  
егда седмь крат кровь Свою Христос излияше<sup>287</sup>

*The image of the Mother of God, with seven swords  
Plunged into her breast, is a symbol  
Of her seven sorrows, which she suffered,  
When the blood of Christ poured from his seven wounds*

Sazonova observes that in this poem the emblematic element is nonetheless present despite the absence of a visible image because the iconography described is familiar to the reader, and so the image is conjured as the poem is read, allowing the parallel construction of meaning through text and image. What she does not draw attention to specifically, however, is the exploitation of the suffering maternal bodily as an emblem of Christian sacrifice. This allegorical association recurs throughout Simeon's oeuvre and is at the heart of *Freny* and the *Plach' tserkve ratuiushchiia* in particular.

As Hippius explains, 'what distinguishes an ordinary simile or metaphor from an emblematic image is that, while the simile compares physical with physical in a generally predictable manner, in the emblem there is usually an arbitrary association between a concrete image and a logical abstraction.'<sup>288</sup> He gives the example of the lion which in a simile or metaphor might stand for courage or ferocity, but in an emblem may illustrate the Resurrection of Christ, an allegory inspired by the belief that the lion is born dead and brought to life by its mother after three days. A similar distinction can be made between the use of metaphor in the *Poslanie k materem* and the use of emblem in Simeon's *Plach' tserkve ratuiushchiia*. In the former, maternal body parts and processes were used to convey ideas of sacrifice, compassion and protection in the specific context of parenthood and family. Simeon, however, takes the symbolic potential of the maternal body out of this immediate context. In the *Plach' tserkve ratuiushchiia* he associates the suffering mother, and in particular the maternal *utroba/chrevo*, with a series of abstract concepts by constructing complex allegories, extending and developing the emblematic

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<sup>287</sup> Sazonova, *Literaturnaia kul'tura Rossii*, p. 317.

<sup>288</sup> Anthony Hippius, 'The Emblem in the Writings of Simeon Polockij', *The Slavic and East European Journal*, 15.2 (Summer 1971), 169.

connection between maternal suffering and Christian sacrifice that appears in the poem *Mech*.

#### 4.2 Maternal meaning in the *Freny*

Although many scholars of Simeon of Polatsk have drawn attention to the use of Baroque features in the *Freny*, they have tended to focus their attentions on the series of nine emblems that follow the cycle of laments, tracing the roots of the images to Western models, as well as commenting on the uniqueness of meaning Simeon imbues to these textual-images.<sup>289</sup> They have not, however, explicitly considered the use of the emblematic style in the texts of the laments themselves.

At the conceptual core of Simeon's exploitation of the maternal body as emblem in these laments, once again, is the pre-existing connection in Muscovite culture between birth and grief, as evoked in the *Plach Bogoroditsy* by the dual meaning of the *utroba* (Fig. 6, p. 133). Simeon endows the experience of grief with didactic power and uses the maternal body to convey a series of moral lessons. In the introduction to the *Freny*, addressed to Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich, Simeon explains that his intention in writing the laments was functional; to provoke catharsis. He intends to deliberately induce sorrow with each lament, and then quiet this sorrow through each consolation poem. Simeon conceives of grief as a (re)productive force. He cites the example of the death of Lazarus, emphasising a causal connection between the tears of Martha, Mary and Christ and the resurrection of Lazarus:

По них же сълезах абие, яко дожде велицем светлое ведро обыче бывати,  
наступи радость и веселие, изыде бо умерый от гроба, яко цвет некий на  
весну от недр земных, дождю бывшу...О преблагословенный дождь слез  
Христа Бога нашего, яко от неплоднаго гробнаго камене возрасти траву и  
цвет духовный, Лазаря, глаголю, человека.<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>289</sup> Sazonova, *Literaturnaia kul'tura Rossii*, p.271-282; Hippisley, *The Poetic Style of Simeon Polotsky*, p. 49. Hippisley also observes the monumental style of this poem, reminiscent of the elaborate architecture of the Baroque and comments that the *Freny* 'could perhaps be compared to a mausoleum adorned with the usual symbols of death', p. 65.

<sup>290</sup> Simeon Polockij, *Rifmologion, Eine Sammlung höfisch-zeremonieller Gedichte*, vol. 2, ed. by Anthony Hippisley, Hans Rohe and Lydia I. Sazonova, (Vienna, Cologne, Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 2017), p. 262.

*Then, by their tears, as after heavy rain the bucket overflows, came cheer and joy,  
the dead man emerged from the grave, like a flower in spring from the depths of  
the earth after the rain...O most blessed is the rain that are the tears of our Lord  
Jesus Christ, as from the barren gravestone sprung grass and a holy flower, I say,  
Lazarus the man.*

The description of Lazarus springing from the ‘depths of the earth’ like a flower suggests birth, particularly as this word *nedra* (bowels, innards) is a word that is used alongside *utroba* and *chrevo* in Muscovite culture to refer to the location in the body where babies gestate.<sup>291</sup> Simeon goes on to say that although, unlike Lazarus, the ‘sorrowful’ laments he presents to the Tsar will not resurrect the Tsaritsa in body, they will help to resurrect her soul in the Kingdom of Heaven. Grief, in this way, is conceived of as a necessary part of, even a catalyst for, the process of resurrection and the renewal of life in heaven.

This central eschatological idea is conveyed throughout the remainder of the *Freny* through the use of maternal imagery, centred on the maternal corpse of the Tsaritsa herself. Simeon uses Mariia Ilichna’s corpse as an emblem of Christian love, understood as the willingness to suffer on earth in order to receive the reward of incorruptibility and eternal life in heaven. Her dead body forms both the subject and the emblematic centrepiece of the series of poems, as witnessed by the concluding *Slovo posledniago tselovaniia* where her corpse actually ‘speaks’, explaining its function as an allegorical image:

Гласа не имам, все глаголет тело  
Духовным неким гласом тихим зело  
Вся кости моя рекут в ползу слово,  
Сердце да будет прияти готово.<sup>292</sup>

*I have no voice; my body speaks all  
In a very quiet, spiritual voice*

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<sup>291</sup> See Chapter II, ‘Mother as ‘Father’: Parenthood as patriarchy in the *Stepennaia kniga*’, p. 6.

<sup>292</sup> Polockij, *Rifmologion*, vol. 2, p. 316.

*All my bones speak in place of words  
In order that the heart might be ready to accept*

As well as the central eschatological message, Mariia's emblematic corpse conveys several political messages to Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich throughout the *Freny*. I focus on two in particular. Simeon mobilises and combines pre-existing allegories of the Church as wife, mother and body, to construct, firstly, the relationship of the Tsar to his wife and, secondly, the relationship between Tsar and Church as relations of dominance and subservience using imagery of maternal suffering in childbirth. In so doing, he endows this gendered vision of sacrificial maternal love with political currency.

In Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians (5:22-32), the relationship between Christ and the Church is understood as a gendered one and is explained with reference to the relationship between husband and wife. This passage is part of the Muscovite marriage ceremony, and is recited before the couple just after their crowning in matrimony:

Жены своимъ мужемъ повинуйтеся, аки Господу: зане мужъ есть глава жены, якоже и Христосъ глава церкви: и той есть спаситель тела.<sup>293</sup>

*Wives should obey their husbands as the Lord, for the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church, and he is the Saviour of the body.*

Here the Church is both the bride of Christ and also his body. In the *Freny*, Simeon refers to this passage several times, describing the marriage between Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich and Mariia Ilichna as a 'bodily union' that has been torn asunder by Mariia's death.<sup>294</sup> In the *Slovo posledniago tselovaniia*, Simeon describes precisely how he envisions the union of Tsar and Tsaritsa as a union of 'flesh' beneath a 'crowned head':

Дондеже в мире жила есмь с тобою

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<sup>293</sup> See, for example, Trebnik, Fond. IV-1221, ff.50r-51v (1658) <<http://old.stsl.ru/manuscripts/staropechatnye-knigi/1221>> [accessed 20 January 2020]; or Euchologion (Molitvoslov, Trebnik), Fond. IV-1222, f. 79r (1662) <<http://old.stsl.ru/manuscripts/staropechatnye-knigi/1222>> [accessed 20 January 2020].

<sup>294</sup> 'Союз телесный аще расторжеся / обаче любви в них не распряжеся' (This bodily union has been dissolved / but their love has not been uncoupled), Polockij, *Rifmologion*, vol. 2, p. 315.



В единой плоти, ты взаим со мною  
Жила же есмь аз в твоей царстей славе  
Честно, яко плоть при венчанной главе<sup>295</sup>

*When I lived in the world with you  
In one flesh, you and I together  
I lived in your regal glory  
Honestly, like flesh beneath a crowned head*

In this stanza, Simeon of Polatsk interprets the Ephesians passage literally, using the division of the Tsar's physical frame into body and head to represent the subservience of wife to husband. Going on to describe Mariia's flesh rotting, Simeon uses the Tsaritsa's body to construct a *memento mori* for the Tsar himself:

Зри, Алексие, како твоя жена,  
Царица бывши, костьми обнаженна.  
Веждь, Царю славный, како смерть равняет  
Вся и плоть мою во прах прелагает.<sup>296</sup>

*See, Aleksei, how your wife  
Having been Tsaritsa, is now stripped to the bone.  
Know, glorious Tsar, death makes all things equal  
And turns my flesh to dust*

In the *Slovo posledniago tselovaniia*, Simeon extends Mariia's death into an image of her general willingness to sacrifice herself both physically and spiritually for the Tsar. 'Mariia' explains, for example, that she was prepared to sacrifice herself a hundred times in order that he would not be harmed, and even to face excommunication for his sake:

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<sup>295</sup> Polockij, *Rifmologion*, vol. 2, p. 318.

<sup>296</sup> Polockij, *Rifmologion*, vol. 2, p. 318.

Избрала бы аз стократно умерети  
Нежели персту твоему болети.  
... и анафему на мя бых приняла  
Неже на тебе гнев Божии слышала.<sup>297</sup>

*I would have chosen to die a hundred times  
rather than see a single of your fingers harmed  
... and I would have accepted excommunication  
rather than heard the wrath of God against you.*

This is particularly pertinent considering the religious context, in which ‘heretics’ were being persecuted and excommunicated. In this way, Simeon uses Mariia’s death in childbirth to support an image of gender subjugation, expressed as a ‘necessary sacrifice’, which is envisioned as bodily difference (Tsar as head/ Tsaritsa as body). This poem moves away from the strategy of the *SK*, where the legitimacy of the male ruler was marked by the attribution of reproductive body parts to the father. In this poem, the dominance of the ruler is expressed by means of his distance from, rather than association with, reproductive flesh. The mother’s corporeal suffering constructs the legitimacy and authority of the father.

The twelfth lament, the *Plach’ tserkve ratuiushchiia*, also develops this vision of male political power expressed through the suffering and dismemberment of the female body. It does this by linking Mariia’s death with moral and political commentary on the Muscovite Church. Paralleling the Tsaritsa’s loss of her infant daughter Evdokiia in childbirth, Simeon of Polatsk casts the Orthodox Church as a mother grieving over the loss of her ‘daughter’ and extends the Church’s grief to all her warring ‘children’ (*chada*). As noted above, the allegory of the Church as body, wife and mother (the flesh of Christ) originates from the Bible and has a long history in Muscovite culture. Fourteenth-century hagiographer Epifanii Premudryi (Epiphanius the Wise) wrote a lament from the perspective of the Church to celebrate St. Stefan Bishop of Perm, preceding Simeon of Polatsk’s version by three centuries in its use of a grieving woman to personify the Church. In the Life of Bishop Stefan, the Church of Perm laments the death of her

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<sup>297</sup> Polockij, *Rifmologion*, vol. 2, p. 317.

‘husband’. In this lament, Epifanii does employ the allegory of the Church as a body and the Christian flock as her limbs: *bolit iazveiu telo tserkovnoe, i udove otchasti* (the body of the Church suffers a wound, and so in places have her limbs).<sup>298</sup> However, he does not dwell on or develop this image of the suffering female body. Where Epifanii does use bodily imagery to express grief, as for example when he cites Psalm 102 (*and my heart disappeared and my flesh, and my days disappeared like smoke and my bones dried out and my heart withered like the grass*), he associates this withered body with the land of Perm, following Psalm 62 (*being as I am in the land of Perm, which is like a desert, inaccessible and dry*). When, however, Epifanii describes the Church’s grief and its physical effects in detail, the Church is presented not as a woman but as an architectural body:

И свет очию, и той несть со мною. Увы мне, свете очию моею, камо зайде;  
откоуду же ми просветится лоуча, светилоу моему зашедшоу? Иже иногда  
имехъ над главою моею свещоу светящоу, ныне же свеща оугасе ми; иже  
иногда имехъ скровище сокровено в сосуде глиняне, ныне же скровище без  
вести бысть<sup>299</sup>

*And the light of my eyes is not with me. Alas, light of my eyes, where have you set?  
Where will I find another ray of enlightenment, my faded luminary? Once I had a  
shining candelabra above my head, but now the candle has been extinguished.  
Once I had a treasure hidden in a clay vessel, but now the treasure has gone.*

The Church expresses her grief through imagery of the loss of objects found inside a Church: candelabra, candles, treasures, vessels and so on. Later in the same passage the Church expresses her loss in terms of clothing, describing how her light and beautiful marriage vestments have been replaced by dark, gloomy mourning robes, and how her ecclesiastical wealth has been replaced by nakedness and poverty.<sup>300</sup> Epifanii expresses the grief of the Church by means of the loss of external attributes and/or accessories. In

<sup>298</sup> *Zhitie sv. Stefana, episkopa Permskogo napisannoe Epifaniem Premudrym*, ed. by V. G. Druzhinin, (Saint Petersburg: Arkheograficheskii komitet, 1897), reprinted (The Hague: Apophoreta Slavica, 1959), p.92.

<sup>299</sup> *Zhitie sv. Stefana, episkopa Permskogo napisannoe Epifaniem Premudrym*, p.94.

<sup>300</sup> *Zhitie sv. Stefana, episkopa Permskogo napisannoe Epifaniem Premudrym*, p.94.

the *Plach' tserkve ratuiushchiia*, Simeon of Polatsk's interpretation of the Church as a woman is based on a vision of female reproductive difference. The body of Simeon's Church is maternal; her grief and loss symbolised not through the loss of treasures or rich clothes but through dismemberment and disembowelment in childbirth.

The maternal body in this poem doubles as an emblematic image representing both Mother Church and the Tsaritsa herself, who died in the act of giving birth (and whose daughter also died along with her). Simeon explicitly connects the image of the Church as a woman with the figure of Mariia Ilichna in several ways. Firstly, he constructs the Church as a mother (as well as a wife), with direct reference to Revelations 12.1-17. The opening of the lament paraphrases this scriptural passage, in which John the Evangelist sees a woman (often interpreted as the Church) clothed in the sun with a crescent moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars. This woman gives birth to a son in great pain, and God raises her son up to heaven and saves him from being eaten by a dragon. After the retelling of the Revelations narrative, Simeon extends its significance into seventeenth-century Muscovy, where the woman gives birth to a daughter:

Но ныне паки начах аз болети,  
даде бо ми Бог дщерь благу имети,  
А смерть лютая ону похитила  
и в темном гробе, увы, заключила.<sup>301</sup>

*But now I have begun to suffer pain again,  
For God gave me the grace to have a daughter  
And grim death stole her away  
And locked her in a dark tomb, alas.*

The second way this Revelations figure can be seen to represent Mariia Ilichna herself is because of the association this image had in contemporary religious culture with the Mother of God. The Marian interpretation of this image was particularly prevalent in the European Catholic tradition, where iconographic representations of the Virgin

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<sup>301</sup> Polockij, *Rifmologion*, vol. 2, p. 311.

crowned with twelve stars and standing on a crescent moon became increasingly common across the seventeenth century (eventually arriving in Moscow in the 1680s).<sup>302</sup>

Photo of fragment from the illustrated title page of Lazar' Baranovych *Truby sloves'' propovidnykh*'' (1674) showing the Virgin crowned with twelve stars removed for copyright reasons. Copyright holder is Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine, Kyiv.

Simeon does not explicitly refer to this iconographic image, or refer to the woman as the Mother of God, but his familiarity with the image is very likely, since it appears on the illustrated title page of Lazar' Baranovych's *Truby sloves" propovidnykh" na narochityia dni prazdnikov* (*Trumpets of the homiletic words for major feast days*, Kyiv, 1674), and it is known that Simeon of Polatsk, as Baranovych's student, greatly admired his work and indeed encouraged others to read it.<sup>303</sup> It seems likely, therefore, that Simeon might be capitalising on the dual association of this image both with Mary/Mariia and with the Church.

Having established the connection between the Muscovite Church and Mariia Plichna, Simeon develops the motif of suffering in childbirth. He takes the image of the woman in the travails of labour—which in Revelations amounts to the single line: 'и во чреве имущи, вопиет болящи и страждущи родити' ('and being with child, she cried out from the pain and labour of birth')—and extends it over the course of the whole poem, transforming it into an exegesis on sacrificial Christian love and providing a political commentary on the disintegration of the Muscovite Church.

In constructing the Church as a maternal body, Simeon of Polatsk only ever refers to two body parts: the eyes and the *utroba/chrevo*, which are both pre-existing rhetorical motifs used in Old Slavonic laments. Simeon transforms their symbolic potential, constructing these body parts not as simple metaphors but as emblems through a series of extended analogies. Table 14 below draws together every instance in which Simeon uses this bodily imagery in the *Plach' tserkve ratuiushchiia*.

| <b>Table 14. Imagery of the eyes, <i>utroba</i> and <i>chrevo</i> in the <i>Plach' tserkve ratuiushchiia</i></b> |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| (1)  | Похитила Марию-царицу,<br>едину ока моего зеницу.<br>Зеница моя прахом потрясенна<br>смертным, како аз буду просвещенна? | [Death] has taken Tsaritsa Mariia<br>The pupil of my eye<br>My pupil has been shaken by the dust<br>of mortality |

<sup>302</sup> See, for example, Vasilii Poznanskii's icon *Blagodatnoe nebo*, located in the Church of the Crucifixion in the Teremnoy Palace of the Kremlin, which dates from 1682.

<sup>303</sup> Bartolini, Maria Grazia., "'Judging a book by its cover": meditation, memory and invention in seventeenth-century Ukrainian title pages', *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 59.1-2 (2017), 8-9; Hippiisley, *The Poetic Style of Simeon Polotsky*, p. 37. Hippiisley notes that Polatskii encourages his audience to read Baranovych's *Mech Dukhovnyi* in one of the other poems of the *Rifmologion*.

|     |  |  |
|-----|--|--|
|     | Слезы прах родит, а не просвещает,<br>утроба моя убо да ридает.<br>Увы мне, увы, в болезни родихся,<br>болезни плача не у свободихся! <sup>304</sup> | <i>How will I be enlightened?<br/>Dust gives birth to tears, and does<br/>not enlighten,<br/>My utroba sobs.<br/>Woe is me, alas, I was born in<br/>suffering<br/>And have not been freed of the<br/>suffering<br/>of lamentation!</i> |
| (2) | Чюждий гонят, чада гризыт чрево<br>Яко червь, в нем же родися, яст древо <sup>305</sup>  | <i>Foreigners threaten me, my children<br/>chew my chrevo<br/>Like worms, who eat the tree in which<br/>they are born</i>  |
| (3) | В секратих летех елицы сынове<br>Терзаша мое чрево, яко львовые.<br>Единство мое в части раздираху<br>Нешвенну ризу Христову терзаху <sup>306</sup>  | <i>In recent years some of my sons<br/>Have ripped my chrevo like lions<br/>Tearing apart my unity<br/>Ripping the unsewn robes of Christ</i>  |
| (4) | От тех едино испаде днесь око<br>И закопаса во земли глубоко.<br>Смерть извлече е из главы моея... <sup>307</sup>                                    | <i>Of these (eyes) one has not fallen out<br/>And been buried deep below the earth<br/>Death has reaped it from my head...</i>   |
| (5) | Днесь, увы, зайде во дски земна гроба<br>Како терпети может утроба? <sup>308</sup>   | <i>Now, alas, [she] has entered her<br/>earthly grave<br/>How can my utroba bear it?</i>   |

In Table 14, example 1, Simeon underscores grief as the continuity between birth and death using the eyes and the *utroba*. In the central stanza of the extract, the function of the *utroba* and the eye appear to be reversed: the ‘mortal dust’ that strikes the Church’s eye ‘gives birth’ to tears, and the *utroba* weeps. Simeon exploits the pre-existing

<sup>304</sup> Polockij, *Rifmologion*, vol. 2, p. 311.

<sup>305</sup> Polockij, *Rifmologion*, vol. 2, p. 311.

<sup>306</sup> Polockij, *Rifmologion*, vol. 2, p. 311.

<sup>307</sup> Polockij, *Rifmologion*, vol. 2, p. 311.

<sup>308</sup> Polockij, *Rifmologion*, vol. 2, p. 312.

association of the pain of the *utroba* indicating both birth and sorrow (‘*Uvy mne, uvy, v bolezni rodikhsia/bolezni placha ne u svobodikhsia!*’) and the capacity of optic imagery to convey sorrow and blindness simultaneously. The loss of a child is compared to the Church’s loss of vision. In the canon of Old Slavonic laments, the mourner often refers to the deceased as ‘the light of their eyes’ (a reference to Psalms 37:11) and describes how their vision has darkened since that light has disappeared. To recall, in the lament of the Church to St. Stefan the Church of Perm describes the deceased as her eyes—*ochi tserkvi Khristovy* (the eyes of the Church of Christ), and laments that her eyes have gone dark since his death:

И свѣтъ очию, и той несть со мною. Увы мнѣ, свѣте очию моею, камо зайде?....<sup>309</sup>

*And the light of my eyes is no longer with me. Woe is me, light of my eyes, where have you set?*

Simeon of Polatsk combines and extends these two optical metaphors in the *Plach’ tserkve ratuiushchiia*, describing Mariia Ilchna as the Church’s eye that is gouged from her head by death (Table 14, example 4). Simeon utilises a desolate image of a blind and decomposing maternal body to construct a political allegory of Muscovite religious disunity and the Church’s loss of ‘enlightenment’. Simeon also conveys his approval of Aleksei Mikhailovich’s role in the Schism by casting Tsar and the Tsaritsa as the eyes of the Church, watching out for ‘sinful children’ who have lost their way and need to be banished from ‘Zion’ (here, clearly, Moscow):

Бог же даде ми чада преблагая,  
супруг царствующ -- очеса драгая.  
Сия очеса на то не дремаша,  
царь и царица везде соглядаша.  
Наблюдше злая порочная чада,  
изгнаша злых зле из Сиона града.<sup>310</sup>

<sup>309</sup> *Zhitie sv. Stefana, episkopa Permskogo napisannoe Epifaniem Premudrym*, p.94.

<sup>310</sup> Polockij, *Rifmologion*, vol. 2, p. 312.



*God gave me most-blessed children*  
*the ruling couple – my dear eyes.*  
*These eyes did not rest,*  
*The Tsar and Tsaritsa were always watchful.*  
*They observed my evil sinful children*  
*And banished the worst of them from the town of Zion.*

The relative positions of the eye and the *utroba/chrevo* in the human torso map neatly onto the head/body divide found in the *Slovo posledniago tselovaniia*. In naming Aleksei Mikhailovich as the Church's remaining eye, Simeon places the Tsar at the head of the Church, just as he is at the head of his wife. In examples 2 and 3 of Table 14, the maternal *chrevo* becomes explicitly symbolic of the unity of the Church ( '*Edinstvo moe v chasti razdirakhu*' ) which is destroyed in two perverted images of childbirth. In Table 14 example 2, the maternal *chrevo* is eaten from the inside out by her own children (evidently denoting members of the newly heretical 'Old Belief'), and, in example 3, the maternal *chrevo* is again ripped to shreds by her 'sons'. Simeon frames this violent and painful destruction of the Church's body as a necessary sacrifice on behalf of her children. In referring to the maternal *chrevo* as 'the unsewn robes of Christ'—as an extension of, or accessory to his body—the poet consolidates the Church's maternal body as an emblem of Christ's sacrificial body. Simeon suggests that the mother enacts Christ's passion through sacrificing herself willingly on behalf of her child. This idea is upheld by the twelfth consolatory poem which follows the *Plach' tserkve ratuiushchiia*, the *Uteshenie tserkvi torzhestvuiushchiia* (*The Consolation of the Glorified Church*, see Table 13). This poem is written from the perspective of the Church in heaven, who explains that while it is painful for her sister on earth to have lost her children and to have suffered, maternal suffering happens by God's design:

...и болезненно ея не имети,  
 но волю Бога есть терпети.  
 Паче в радости лепо приимати

что Бог изволил на тя попущати.<sup>311</sup>

*...and it is painful not to have [Mariia Ilichna] any longer  
But it is God's Will to bear [this pain]  
And it is good to accept with joy  
That which God has allowed to come to pass.*

In the *Plach' tserkve ratuiushchiia* and the corresponding *Uteshenie tserkvi torzhestvuiushchiia*, Simeon capitalises on a discourse of maternal suffering to justify the political subjugation and violence enacted—by the will of the Tsar—during the Schism. Whereas in his poem *Mech*, where the wounded body of the Mother of God stood in for the body of her son, in the *Freny* the maternal *chrevo/utroba* is emblematic of Christ's body. In the *Freny*, Simeon portrays the Schism as a necessary sacrifice, and he does this through the story of Mariia Ilichna's death in childbirth. In this way, the suffering maternal body becomes an emblem of the unity of Church and State: a body politic, headed by the Tsar, who is willing to sacrifice 'his' body (the body of his wife) for the greater good.

In these laments, Simeon of Polatsk constructs the political relationship between the Tsar and the Church and the Tsar and his wife in the same way: using an image of bodily difference—the differentiation of the head from the body, and more specifically; the differentiation of the head from the maternal *utroba/chrevo*. Thus, the *Freny* inscribes existing gender hierarchies into the body in two ways. On the one hand, vertically, by placing the Tsar quite literally 'above' his wife, and on the other, through differentiation of maternal and paternal bodies. The poet associates the Tsaritsa with her reproductive capacity and removes this association from the Tsar. In this poem the symbolic significance of the body in the construction of gender roles is markedly different from the *SK*, which expressed masculine authority through the association of the father with fertility and reproductive function. Simeon expresses masculine dominance through an association of the father with the mind and feminine submission through an association of the mother with body and with reproduction.

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<sup>311</sup> Polockij, *Rifmologion*, vol. 2, p. 315.

Simeon's work reflects the slow crystallisation in seventeenth-century intellectual thought of a series of corresponding conceptual binaries: mind versus body, reason versus passions, male versus female. I should stress that this doesn't mark a watershed moment when the *utroba/chrevo* comes to be considered a gendered organ and comes to be stably associated with the womb. It is still unclear exactly what part of the body Simeon is referring to when he uses these words. The maternal *utroba/chrevo* is not differentiated anatomically, here, but culturally; as a result of the prevailing cultural discourse of maternal suffering where childbirth is framed as a symbol of sacrifice and compassion and the maternal *utroba/chrevo* is cast as a symbol of protection or intercession. This is demonstrated by a comparison of the use of the term *utroba* in association with a male body—Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich—in the context of grief for his deceased wife in the first lament of the *Freny* (Table 13):

Нам без молитвы слезных вод довольно  
 Полны слез очи, и сердце есть полно.  
 Исполнь утроба тяжких воздыханий  
 И вся внутренняя прегорких рыданий.<sup>312</sup>

*We have enough tears without prayer  
 Our eyes are full of tears, and so is the heart  
 The utroba is full of heavy sighing  
 And all our insides filled with bitter weeping*

The description of Aleksei Mikhailovich's *utroba* reveals that there is a gendered difference at play; one marked not by anatomical terminology, but by a gendered discourse on suffering. Both the *utroba* of the Tsar and the Mother Church weep bitter tears. However, in the case of the Tsar, this part is referenced only once, and singularly in the context of grief. In the lament of the Church, Simeon develops the multiple associations that the *utroba/chrevo* holds for women. Through stark images of violence, suffering and disembowelment, he develops it into the emblematic centrepiece of the poem; conveying the symbiosis of Christian love and sacrifice in the figure of the

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<sup>312</sup> Polockij, *Rifmologion*, vol. 2, p. 226.

suffering mother. Simeon's *Freny* demonstrates the cultural currency that the gendered vision of Christian love—as maternal suffering—was gaining in seventeenth-century Muscovy through Baroque culture and suggests the disturbing role this literary discourse may have played in underpinning contemporary narratives of patriarchal authority.

## 5. Conclusion

This chapter has tracked the emergence of a discourse of maternal suffering in seventeenth-century Muscovite poetic culture linked to the emergence of new modes of aestheticizing the body. It has shown how the suffering maternal body featured as a metaphor and was consolidated as a literary trope in connection with the development of figurative language; namely metaphor and allegorical emblem. Through the use of these rhetorical devices, maternal reproductive physiology was associated with values of sacrifice, compassion and protection. These poetic strategies propagated a gendered vision of love and caregiving within the Muscovite family, as demonstrated by the *Poslanie k materem*, which then gained symbolic currency beyond the domestic sphere, as shown by Simeon's *Plach' tserkve ratuiushchiia*. This vision rooted sacrificial love in the mother's body through a celebration and glorification of maternal pain.

The use of references to maternal physiology to convey parental values develops in a specific historical and aesthetic context; the rise of the lyric poetic form in the Muscovite Baroque. The sixteenth-century *Domostroi* does not rely on references to biological processes as a means of representing, demonstrating or explicating the emotional relationship between parent and child. This text is concerned with constructing the family as a microcosm of the hierarchical structures operating in Muscovite society. The father's relationships with other family members parallel other patriarchal relationships: between God and Christians, Tsar and subjects, master and servant. This familial framework only considers the mother-child relationship to the extent that it aligns with the father-child relationship. In the seventeenth-century lyric poetry, however, reflecting the Baroque preoccupation with corporeality, feeling and the senses, parental love is increasingly expressed with recourse to the body and explicitly to maternal pain.

The seventeenth-century poets harness existing Orthodox literary motifs and endow them with new gendered significance through their transformation into metaphor

and emblem. In the *Poslanie k materem*, the maternal body is used as a metaphor to express the values associated with both parents. Female reproductive imagery: pain in childbirth, of breastfeeding and the maternal *utroba* are used to convey generalised parental values of sacrifice, compassion and protection. In the use of such gendered imagery to celebrate parental love, the poem embeds the notion of parental care—both physical and emotional—in the maternal body. Of particular significance in this process both here and in the *Freny* is the *utroba*. While the *utroba* had a long tradition in Muscovite lyric culture as a seat of compassion for both genders, these Baroque poets exploit the multiplicity of cultural meanings of this part for women, combining the suffering *utroba* as an expression of compassion with the suffering *utroba* in the throes of childbirth. In so doing, they construct the *utroba* as a gendered symbol of loving sacrifice, cementing compassion with motherhood. In Simeon's *Freny*, the corpse of the Tsaritsa who died in childbirth is established as an emblem of sacrificial love and is used to express configurations of religious and political power beyond the context of the family (namely to condone Aleksei Mikhailovich's involvement in the Schism). Through the layering of allegories, Simeon constructs the torn maternal *utroba/chrevo* as symbolic of 'indisputable' and 'unconditional' forms of love, namely the Church's love for the faithful. In so doing, the poem enforces and naturalises a gendered image of parental care.

This chapter has shown the importance of considering literary convention in the history of gender, and specifically has signalled the impact of Baroque culture on Muscovite gender norms. If the mother's reproductive physiology forms the symbolic foundation upon which the emotional connection between parent and child is constructed, it encourages the idea firstly that maternal love is hardwired, and secondly that parental love is contingent upon maternal pain. Thus, the development of the suffering mother as a poetic trope cultivates a discourse of parenthood in Muscovite literary culture with potentially profound implications for ideologies of femininity.

## CONCLUSION

The primary impulse behind this thesis has been to bring the study of the body into the study of Muscovite gender history. Over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries new conventions for representing the human body proliferated in Muscovite culture; from medical and anatomical literature to poetry. This coincided with a period of the centralisation of the state under autocratic rule, when ideologies of family were increasingly important to the construction of dynastic authority. This thesis has explored the interaction of these discourses: ideologies of parenthood reflect and are shaped by changing modes of conceptualising and representing the gendered body.

Broadly speaking, the thesis has argued for a revaluation of the meaning of the body in Muscovite definitions of mothers and fathers, men and women. It has demonstrated that in Muscovy, physiological difference was modulated to support and/or propagate ideologies of motherhood and fatherhood. Representations of maternal and paternal bodies were unstable, varied, fluid and ambiguous. Rather than being dependent on a consistent view of anatomical difference, representations of the parental body in any given text were dependent on a shifting combination of aesthetic and ideological factors.

Each chapter of the thesis has analysed representations of reproductive bodies in a range of textual contexts: medical literature, sermons and polemic, dynastic history, domestic literature and poetry. Chapter One tracked references to bodily difference in scientific and medical discourse on anatomy and reproduction, which proliferated from the mid-1550s. In effect, it proposed an overarching theoretical model for conceiving of the relationship between body and gender identity in Muscovy in this period—that the role and significance of anatomy in definitions of gender was unstable and liable to change as social practices changed. I demonstrated that genitalia and reproductive organs received little attention or description in Muscovite medical texts. In fact, it is fair to say that in the texts I examined there is no distinct body of terminology in these texts which exclusively describes sexual or reproductive function, and certainly none that insist on binary distinctions. Words such as *mikhir'*, *utroba*, *chrevo* and *dno* were not attached to distinct organs with discrete functions, but incorporated understandings of reproduction, excretion, and digestion simultaneously. In Muscovy, bodily functions were conceptualised primarily as a series of interrelated cycles rather than as a set of organs.

The emphasis on process and fluidity rather than essence contravenes the modern conception of gender which is linked to anatomy. Anatomy in the late Muscovite period was in constant dialogue with the social and moral life and actions of individuals; influencing and influenced by food, sex, emotion and so on. What clearly emerges from these sources is that the strict divide we maintain today between the ‘biological’ self—which include body and anatomy—and the ‘social’ self—our mental lives, morality, emotions and so on—does not hold for sixteenth and seventeenth-century Muscovy.

Muscovite visions of bodily difference were constructed in the interaction of body with society; through bodily *practices* rather than an idea of sex as a fixed and unchanging state of being. In seventeenth-century sources, breastfeeding and growing a beard were key markers of gender. Although these practices emerge from biological differences between men and women, the sources do not make distinctions according to physical principles (the innate ability to breastfeed or grow a beard), but according to social principles (how engaging in these practices supports the gendered hierarchy within the family). Not all members of the male sex have beards, and not all women breastfeed. These practices were less markers of anatomical difference than social markers defining gender roles in a specific social context: marriage and family. Growing a beard was a marker of masculine authority whereas breastfeeding, correspondingly, marked feminine subservience and responsibility for caregiving.

The remainder of the thesis explored the varied role played by the body in representations of reproduction beyond medical literature. I demonstrated how the body consistently served to uphold the gender hierarchy of masculine authority and feminine subservience in literary representations of parenthood over the period. *How* bodily difference was represented, however, and the significance placed on physiology in ideologies of motherhood and fatherhood varied considerably. Based on my analysis, I discerned some specific trajectories over the historical period.

Beginning from the sixteenth century, family began to form the subject of literary texts more frequently. The consolidation of autocratic rule and the consequent imperative to construct narratives of dynastic legitimacy produced ideologies of the royal family, as witnessed by the *SK*, and in parallel to this arose the impulse to regulate the ‘standard’ Muscovite elite family, as witnessed by the *Domostroi*. Both texts differentiate between mother and father in terms of the *degree* to which they perform reproductive and parental

roles successfully, which is determined by their relative status within the family and the dynasty. In both texts, parenthood is aligned with patriarchal authority. In behavioural terms, the parental role mirrors that of ruler and priest. In the *SK*, the mother's failure to perform these practices as successfully as the father, due to the restrictions imposed by her status, indicates her position of subservience in relation to him, and this is reflected in the way her body and the emotional relationship with her child are represented.

The presence of the maternal body in the text is diminished. Instead, the text is concerned primarily with depicting the ceremonial and ritualised aspects of reproduction, where paternal figures take the central role. Representations of conception and childbirth focus on the prophecies, premonitions and liturgical ceremonies surrounding these physiological moments, featuring the intervention of holy men, priests and the Grand Prince. There is no gendered division of reproductive parts—*chresla*, *utroba*, *chrevo* can be attributed to both mothers and fathers—rather, reference to these body parts tends to take the form of Biblical citations about progeny (such as *plod'' chreva*) that emphasise the virility of fathers, and associate mothers with abstinence and chastity. As the text minimises the narrative presence of the maternal body, it likewise downplays social or emotional interactions between mother and child, as witnessed by the example of Mariia Shvarnovna. The mother is celebrated instead for her symbolic contribution to dynastic legitimacy (through her connection with holy sites or holy figures). In the *Domostroi*, neither reproductive anatomy nor references to childbirth or feeding play a role in constructing parental identity. The mother-child relationship is entirely subsumed into the relationship between father and children, which is modelled on patriarchal hierarchies. Correspondingly, it is only the *Domostroi* father, not the mother, who feels love or is 'embodied' in the text through references to the heart. In both the *SK* and the *Domostroi*, the maternal body, if represented at all, is disassociated from the biological processes of reproduction and her body connected with denial and abstinence. Reproductive capacity and emotional markers are indicative of authority and are resultantly attributed to paternal figures.

As the seventeenth century progressed, new aesthetic influences from Belarus, Ukraine and Poland emerged in Muscovite literary culture that transformed the symbolic potential of the human body and contributed to the development of a separate discourse on motherhood. These literary developments can be seen in conjunction with wider



epistemological shifts occurring across Europe. As the practice of human dissection advanced across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the human body was opened up to enquiry not only physically on the operating table but also symbolically and conceptually in philosophy, art and literature. The body increasingly became an object to be explored empirically, scientifically and rationally. This rendered it separate from (and inferior to) human reason in a way it had not been in earlier centuries. While in Muscovy, the scientific practice of dissection was not introduced until the time of Peter I at the beginning of the eighteenth century, critical engagement with the body was engendered already in seventeenth-century Muscovy through Baroque culture.

In the *Poslanie k materem* and Simeon of Polatsk's *Freny*, the fragmentation of the human body is a poetic strategy, achieved not with the scalpel but through the use of figurative language. This poetic 'autopsy' is gendered; it is the maternal body that is dissected and from which moral lessons are harvested through the construction of metaphor and emblem. In the *Poslanie k materem*, the maternal body stands in for both parents, acting as a metaphor for the moral values associated with parenthood. Maternal body parts such as the *utroba* and the physical trauma associated with birth and feeding are used as metaphors expressing parental sacrifice, compassion and protection. Despite the fact that the father does not experience the same physical pain as the mother in the production of offspring, in the *Poslanie k materem* the poet extends this pain to the father's body using the metaphor of the suffering heart. In the *Freny*, Simeon's treatment of the mother is a literal 'autopsy'. He constructs the corpse of Tsaritsa Mariia Ilichna as an emblem, using her body to construct numerous layers of moral and political commentary. In the *Plach' tserkve ratuiushchiia*, Simeon's description of the grieving Mother Church is reminiscent of a decomposing corpse on a dissecting table. Simeon transforms the pre-existing literary motif of blindness to express sorrow, using the enucleation of the Church not only as a metaphor for grief, but extending it through allegory into a political emblem of the loss of enlightenment in the Muscovite Church. In a similar way, the maternal *utroba* is extended beyond the context of family into a multivalent emblem. Simeon uses the rupture of the maternal *utroba* as both a *memento mori*—an emblem of the inevitable progression from birth to death—and also as an emblem of Christian love, a reminder that sacrifice and suffering on earth is a precursor to eternal life in heaven. This has the dual didactic function of comforting Aleksei

Mikhailovich with respect to his wife's death in childbirth and condoning the Tsar's involvement in the Schism in the Muscovite Church.

Both these poems demonstrate the importance of literary convention as much as scientific and religious thought in the construction of ideologies of parenthood and gendered embodiment. Figurative language such as metaphor, allegory and emblem facilitate new configurations of body and gender by tying emotional and moral ideas to body parts and biological processes. Central to the poets' symbolic arsenal is the maternal *utroba*, whose multiple connotations in Muscovite culture as the bodily source of compassion and of children enable it to be constructed as a powerful metaphor, tying both emotional and physical suffering together in the figure of the mother. The establishment of the discourse of maternal, and not paternal, suffering has potentially significant repercussions for gender ideologies in Muscovy. Firstly, the expression of unconditional love for children through imagery of the mother's sacrificial body propagates a specifically gendered vision of parental love and care, which is framed as inherent for women in a way it is not for men. Secondly, the celebration of maternal pain contributes to the normalisation of gendered suffering. Feminine subservience is instilled into female reproductive flesh in these poems through the discourse of maternal sacrifice. Her body represents 'the' parental body, which is objectified and dissected to articulate the values associated with parenthood, while the father is disembodied. These images of violence done to the mother's body, framed as metaphors of love, caregiving and sacrifice, have the potential to promote a broader ideology in which for women, the expression of those qualities and the experience of that pain go hand in hand.

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