

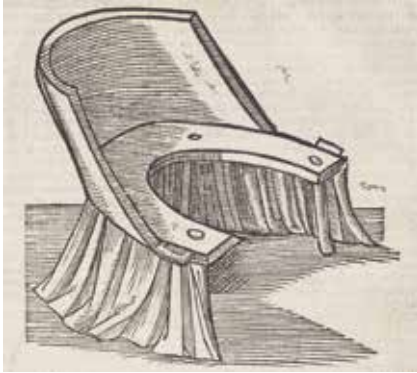




1
M&Others

“For I do not like the idea of taking the wives in this condition, neither mine nor yours,” wrote Jacques della Faille on 7 September 1585 to his brother-in-law Daniël Van der Meulen regarding a business trip.¹ The spouses of both Antwerp merchants were expecting, so it was considered best that they remained behind. Although pregnancies were crucial in the early modern period for consolidating marital alliances, ensuring familial and dynastic continuity and preserving family property, it is difficult to trace individual stories. Accounts of women’s lives, whether biographical or autobiographical, are scarce and visual sources are often misleading: the voluminous gowns of the period make it difficult to identify a swollen belly as a pregnant one. Two mothers-to-be, Hester della Faille (1558/59-1643) and Catharina Behaghel (1597-1666), are rare exceptions. One paints a vivid picture of her maternal joys and sorrows in letters that have managed to survive, while the other was depicted in a remarkable portrait painted by Jacob Jordaens in 1635, which – to our knowledge – is the only Southern Netherlandish Baroque pregnancy portrait.

Hester was the daughter of Jan della Faille, a prominent Antwerp merchant whose booming company had established numerous foreign branches.² The prosperity this brought also translated into social status: in 1562, Emperor Ferdinand I granted him the privilege of bearing a coat of arms. Hester’s mother, Cornelia Van der Capelle, died shortly after giving birth to Hester’s youngest sister. Hester was approximately nine years old at the time. As the daughter of an affluent merchant family, she enjoyed a well-rounded education that included reading, writing, arithmetic, book-keeping, playing the harpsichord, and singing lessons. Her social standing is also evident in a portrait probably painted by Bernaert De Rijckere when she was about twenty-five (fig. 1). In keeping with the fashion of the day, she wears an elegant black robe and panned sleeves lavishly embellished with gold thread. Her white undershirt and ruff are trimmed with costly lace. She holds a pair of embroidered leather gloves and wears gold jewellery – some set with pearls and gemstones – in her hair, on her fingers, on her wrists, and at her neck and waist. Hester’s portrait is a pendant to that of her future husband, Antwerp merchant and politician Daniël Van der Meulen. Both portraits date from 1583, a year before the couple married on 24 December 1584. Hester’s wedding plans were complicated by a clause in her late father’s will: under the guardianship of her three brothers, Hester was to marry only if they approved her marriage partner. After all, her father’s substantial inheritance and the associated financial interests were at stake. However, Hester’s brothers withheld their consent. Jacques and Jan eventually conceded, but Maarten continued to have reservations about Daniël, perhaps related to his questionable Catholic beliefs. So Hester left for Haarlem, where she resided with an aunt, and married there. Two months later, she was pregnant. The child was born in Bremen where, over an almost six-year period, she gave



3. Birthing chair in Jakob Ruf's *T'Boeck vande Vroet-Wijfs*, 1591. Antwerp, The Phoebus Foundation.



2. A birthing room shown on the frontispiece of Jakob Ruf's *T'Boeck vande Vroet-Wijfs*, 1591. Antwerp, The Phoebus Foundation.

birth to five infants, one of whom died soon after birth. The family moved to Leiden in 1591, where they welcomed another five children.

Because Daniël was often away on business or diplomatic trips, Hester made sure she had help on hand and was attended by a midwife and a wet nurse during and after every birth. She also wrote to her husband with news of the children and gave him a household to-do list. On 21 September 1593 “in haste” she wrote, “our Emilia can walk about the house with her falling cap on without any help. It’s so touching to behold because she is so young.” The falling cap – also known as a pudding cap – was a sausage-like roll of padded fabric to protect the one-year-old’s head when she stumbled. Hester also asked him to “remember to have the birthing chair made. The bars have to be at least a hand’s-width higher than those of the other one I have.”³ She may have been referring to the type of birthing chair that the Swiss doctor Jakob Ruf included in his book, translated into Dutch as, [*The Book of Midwifery*] (1591) (figs. 2-3), which was intended to ease childbirth.⁴ That it was a matter of some urgency is clear – Johannes (‘Hansken’) was born on 27 January 1594.⁵ Seeing how, as Ruf observed also, premature babies had a poor chance of survival, he most likely came into the world full-term.⁶ This means that Hester was about five months pregnant when she wrote to Daniël



Jeanne Lanvin



Motherhood – both as a physical state and a lived experience – gradually became more visible in twentieth-century fashion imagery. However, the significant influence of motherhood on fashion design, both as a creative practice and a commercial enterprise, remains underexplored by historians of fashion and dress. This essay delves deeper into the life and work of two prominent twentieth-century fashion designers who self-identified as ‘fashion mothers’: Jeanne Lanvin (1867-1946), the modern, sphinx-like couturière of whom no personal writings have survived, and Sonia Rykiel (1930-2016), the postmodern public intellectual, author and designer, most famous for her timeless, unruly *démodé* approach to fashion.¹

Both these designers had symbiotic relationships with their daughters, Marguerite di Pietro and Nathalie Rykiel, which were strengthened by the absence of father figures, leading to a difficult psychic process of separation later in life. The daughters’ shifting roles – from source of inspiration, to central motif, to a projection screen for ideas, as well as creative or business collaborators – is an important evolution in the designers’ careers. By exploring and highlighting the impact of motherhood on the specific fashion trajectories of Lanvin and Rykiel, both in terms of their artistry and their business models, I aim to provide a stepping-stone for the interpretation of careers of fashion mothers in a larger sense, historically and today.

Jeanne Lanvin



1. Portrait of Jeanne Lanvin and Marguerite di Pietro, 1897
© Patrimoine Lanvin.

The eldest of a modest family of eleven children, Jeanne Lanvin had to support herself as early as the age of thirteen.² As an apprentice in Parisian millinery ateliers at the age of fifteen, she started making doll hats from the scraps of fabric, selling them door to door with her brother after hours. In 1889, she had saved up enough money to start her own millinery business together with her brother, sister and sister-in-law; the House of Lanvin was conceived of as a family business, with Jeanne as a matriarch at the top.

With the arrival of her first and only child Marguerite di Pietro in 1897, when Jeanne was thirty, she felt reborn as a designer; she started to make children’s garments because no existing styles for children were to her liking (fig. 1). In 1908, she opened a childrenswear shop, selling luxurious garments together with custom chiffon miniature dolls, functioning both as children’s playthings and as publicity artifacts.³ Marguerite was the *raison d’être* for her mother’s fashion business, the muse at the heart of the *maison*.⁴ When Marguerite attended her piano lessons, she not only looked ravishing in her little pale pink dresses but also elegant and relaxed whilst playing the piano. In 1909, in response to insistent requests from the other children’s



1. Paolo Roversi, Portrait of Ann Demeulemeester and her son Victor Robyn, 1998 © Paolo Roversi

INTERVIEW

ANN DEMEULEMEESTER

Ann Demeulemeester graduated from the Antwerp Fashion Academy in 1981, moving to London with the Antwerp Six in 1986 (she could not join the first time, in 1985, because she was pregnant). In that same year, she launched her own collection and fashion house, Ann Demeulemeester, which evolved into one of the most successful Belgian labels. She headed it until 2013, when she announced her departure from the fashion world. Her son Victor Robyn, whom she had with photographer Patrick Robyn, was born in 1986, in the same year that she launched her first independent collection.

Eve Demoen: The 1985-86 period was extraordinary: you were working on a new collection and expecting your first baby at the same time. Can you share something about those early years?

Ann Demeulemeester: When I graduated, I worked with Martin Margiela at raincoat manufacturer Bartsons. Although I learned a great deal working in this commercial sector of the fashion industry, I longed to explore my creativity and design my own collection. Yet at the same time, Patrick and I really wanted children, and knew this was the right moment or it would never happen. I knew it wouldn't be easy, but we were convinced we could make it work;

we had to. I was pregnant with a baby but also with my collection. It was difficult because pregnancy was physically exhausting. I drew and sketched my collection on paper, and went to bed at nine o'clock. Eight months later, my son was born and I passed him to Patrick, my husband. I rested, then started on my collection.

ED: At the time, your husband Patrick Robyn was also embarking on a promising career as a photographer. How did you find a good work-life balance? Was there a clear division of parental duties?

ADM: We made a conscious choice to have a baby at that precise moment. After Victor was born, Patrick took care of our son. He couldn't wait to look after him, and put his career as a photographer on the back burner so I could focus on my work and start my collection. This division of duties was simply what was needed to make the Ann Demeulemeester fashion house a reality. We always did things together. We didn't want to choose. We wanted it all. We didn't have a support network. Our parents didn't live nearby, and I really didn't have any social life to speak of outside the fashion world. I was always working. We took the baby with us everywhere. I didn't know many people who had children. My fashion friends were mostly men and anyway, a child didn't really fit into the lifestyle or vision of a creative professional. All our focus had

Christian Dior & Madeleine Dior

Christian Dior was born on 21 January 1905, the second child of Alexandre Louis Maurice Dior and Marie-Madeleine Juliette Martin (then 26) in Angers, after Raymond. He was followed by three more children: Jacqueline, Bernard and Ginette, known as Catherine.² The Dior family belonged to the upper class. Soon after Christian was born, the family moved to the periphery of Granville where they lived at the Villa Les Rhumbs, with a large parcel of land and views of the sea. With the exception of the summer months, Granville was a sleepy coastal town. Alexandre Dior owned a family business that consisted of several factories that produced and processed fertilisers and chemicals. Although extremely lucrative, it cast a rank odour over the seaside town, much to Madeleine's dismay. In a seemingly characteristic move, she retaliated by filling her garden with fragrantly scented flowers to disguise the unpleasant smell.³ As *chatelaine* of the family, Madeleine kept the household firmly under control. The children received a rigorous, strict upbringing from two authoritarian parents. They were judged on the basis of their behaviour and school results. The family photos that have survived conform to the early-twentieth-century image of the bourgeois family: a mother dressed in the latest fashion, a father in a smart suit and children clad in sailor suits or formal wear (fig. 1). This image aligned perfectly with the norms and values of the *petite bourgeoisie* that Madeleine cherished so dearly.

From an early age, Christian Dior showed a keen interest in fashion. According to the biography of his youngest sister Catherine, he spent a lot of time in the linen room watching the housemaids sewing and altering clothes, but it was his mother who sparked his love of women's fashion.⁴ Catherine describes their mother as a sophisticated, charming woman who delighted in hosting social functions and dressing to play the part.⁵ The Musée Dior Granville has a flapper dress worn by Madeleine in the 1920s, which suggests that she didn't only follow the latest fashion trends, but also enjoyed an active social life in circles when dresses of this kind were worn. In pursuit of her fashion interests, she regularly visited the couturière Rosine Perrault on the Rue Royale in Paris.⁶ The young Christian accompanied her on these trips. The bond between mother and son was strengthened by their shared love of clothes and conversations about fashion and artistic topics.⁷

Only a small portion of the designer's autobiography is devoted to his personal life. In this regard, his mother appears three times, with references to her garden, her death, and her figure – perhaps the most crucial element for his oeuvre: "My entire family had Norman blood, with the exception of my mother, the only slender person with a 'moderate appetite' in our clan of *bon vivants* and hearty eaters."⁸ He would pursue this slender ideal of beauty in all his collections. A sepia photograph of his mother, taken around 1900 (fig. 2) stood on the designer's desk. It showed Madeleine wearing a dress

3. Christian Dior, *Fête* dress, haute couture Spring-Summer 1948 collection, *Envol* line, Musée Christian Dior collection, Granville © Benoit Croisy, coll. Ville de Granville.





8. Lucienne Mathieu-Saint-Laurent and Yves Saint Laurent, Oran, in the 1940s
© all rights reserved.



9. Family portrait, second half of the 1930s © all rights reserved.



10. Yves Saint Laurent with his fictional fashion house and paper mannequins at the age of 21 on his appointment as artistic director at the Dior fashion house from 15 July 1957 © François Pages/Paris Match/Scoop.

Yves Saint Laurent & Lucienne Saint Laurent

Yves Saint Laurent was born on 1 August 1936 in Algeria as Yves Henri Donat Mathieu-Saint-Laurent, son of Lucienne-Andrée Mathieu-Saint-Laurent (née Wilbaux, then aged 23) and Charles Mathieu-Saint-Laurent. His sisters Michèle and Brigitte were born during the Second World War. The family lived in Oran in a French colony. His father ran an insurance agency and a chain of cinemas with branches in Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria. His mother was a housewife and socialite who loved attending and organising dinners and parties where prominent figures were present.

Photographs that have survived capture joyful moments of the young family gathered around the dinner table. What leaps out from the scenes is how affectionately the smiling mother gazes at her son (figs. 8-9). Little Yves, a godsend according to his family, grew up in a sheltered environment and was given everything his heart desired. Lucienne immersed her son in the world of fashion, theatre and cinema from an early age. His interest in drawing and fashion began at the age of three. When he was just 13, after seeing Molière's play *L'École des femmes*, he built a miniature wooden theatre called *Illustre Petit Théâtre*. His sister Brigitte recalls that her brother staged enigmatic plays starring cardboard characters for whom he created costumes using pieces of old sheets and leftover fabric. Yves and his mother also bought fashion magazines together (*Vogue*, *L'Illustration*, *Le Jardin des modes*, *Paris Match*...); he cut out the silhouettes of his favourite models and made collections for them for his fictitious couture label (fig. 11). He created an imaginary fashion house and wrote out invoices in royal blue ink in the name of "Yves Mathieu Saint Laurent, Haute Couture, Place Vendôme", addressed to important Parisian ladies.¹¹

In Oran, Yves Saint Laurent had a happy childhood, surrounded by the fashionable women in his family: his mother, grandmother, his younger sisters and his aunt.¹² This stood in stark contrast to his life at school: as a teenager he attended a strict Catholic school where he was bullied and excluded for being "different". He said that he led a double life: on the one hand at home there was joy and the world he created with his drawings, costumes and theatre; on the other, there was the ordeal of school.¹³ The burden of this double life, combined with his conservative environment's intolerance of his sexual orientation, made him increasingly withdrawn and quiet. When he entered a drawing competition at the age of 15, in June 1955, he came to the attention of Michel de Brunhoff, the editor-in-chief of *Vogue*. De Brunhoff sent the sketches to Christian Dior. Yves enrolled at the *École de Couture* in Paris and then joined fashion house Dior and became head of the House of Dior at the age of 21. Five years later, he launched his first collection under the name "Yves Saint Laurent".



Kybele as the Mother Goddess, ca. 6000-5500 BC, Ankara, Anadolu Medeniyetleri Müzesi © photographer Nevit Dilmen.

MARSH – MOTHER –
MEMBRANE
SMALL COSMOGONY

Barbara Baert



2. Kybele as the Mother Goddess, ca. 6000-5500 BC, Ankara, Anadolu Medeniyetleri Müzesi © photographer Nevit Dilmen.



3. Juan Rizi (1600-1681), *La Mare de Déu de Montserrat* [Black Madonna of Montserrat], ca. 1640 © Montserrat, Museum de Montserrat.

waters, serving as a basin, a receptacle, linguistically holding a memory of the nurturing breasts for future generations. Also worth noting is the Old Russian etymology for milk – *melko* – which is believed to be related to *molokita*: marshy, boggy or, to the Czech word *mlkty*, which means ‘wet’.⁸

According to Australian eco-feminist Rodney James Giblett, wetlands are becoming increasingly polarised in patriarchal Western culture, associated with danger, with disease, with the monstrous body.⁹ Suspicion is cast over the matriarchal principle of the marsh and its essence as dark life-giving potential. Even today, marshes are deemed imaginary *cloacae*, containers of the waste secreted by the earth’s kidneys.¹⁰ Alluded to in such pejorative corporeal terms, the morass becomes a gaping abject opening, a Hellmouth sucking mortals into the inferno.¹¹

The marsh is relegated to the realm of the subversive and of taboos, and must be ‘penetrated’ or drained, Giblett asserts. (From an ecological perspective, the great – and long-undervalued – importance of wetlands was recently brought to the fore once again.) What survives of the female marsh body is two-dimensional: a mucosa, a membrane that enshrouds the age-old powers of matriarchy, trading it for horrors lurking in the orifices of the earth: the wailing monster, the curse of the Black Water that calls to children, the bottomless pit of the Underworld, Frau Holle – in short, the place where fairy tales are whispered in the murk.

By analogy, female fluids, menstrual blood, are perceived as demonic, dirty and dangerous. Menstruation drains the good energies of the body and impairs men’s health; during menstruation, women must remain completely segregated.¹² Camille Paglia states that “the primal swamp is choked with menstrual albumen, the lukewarm matrix of nature, teeming with algae and bacteria”.¹³ In an interview about the work of Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), Julia Kristeva cites male perceptions of the female sex. “Thus women have maladies of the womb, the species eats away at them, an infant is a ‘polyp’, the female body is a ‘swamp that insects and children sink into’, as opposed to the male sex, ‘clean and simple as a finger’.”¹⁴

Serrations – Spikes

In his book *A Glimpse of the Concealed*, Belgian anthropologist Paul Vandenbroeck looks at how the timeworn, geologically sculpted and “toothed” mountain massifs, with their caves and caverns, mirror the great Mother Goddess. Even today, these inaccessible and lofty mountain peaks are home to Marian cult sites. Here, an unusual cult for black mountains, stones and meteorites can be found. In Paphos, Cyprus, Aphrodite is venerated in the guise of a large black basalt stone (fig.1). Kybele, the ancient Magna Mater, is said to have been brought to Rome with great pomp and ceremony,



4. Anonymous, the Holy Virgin of the Mountain of Potosí, 18th century
© Potosí, Casa Nacional de la Moneda.

in the image of a rock. Cybele can probably be traced back to a prehistoric Mother Goddess, worshipped in the form of a gigantic enthroned female figure (fig. 2).

According to legend, the Canarian Virgen de la Peña was discovered in a black rock. And, the veneration of so-called Black Madonnas became increasingly prevalent throughout north-western Europe from the Middle Ages onwards. Her black colouring may allude to a verse from the Song of Solomon (1:5): *Nigra sum sed formosa*; “I am black and/but beautiful.”¹⁵ Yet the blackness of these Marian mother figures also contains arcadian chthonic fantasies such as the famed Black Madonna of Montserrat, portrayed in votive paintings as the serrated mountains she embodies: voluminous, gigantic, conical, the contours of her body depicted as jagged edges (fig. 3). The same applies to the Holy Virgin of the Mountain of Potosí in Bolivia (fig. 4).¹⁶

At the time of writing, I have just visited the Museum Europäischer Kulturen in Berlin, where *Flow: The Exhibition on Menstruation* explores the taboo around female fluids. The exhibition presents two centuries of material culture that has accompanied taboos relating to the womb. The female reproductive organs were imagined as something fearsome: a ferocious monster to be tamed. Talismans and ex-votos of metal and gemstones contain inscriptions beseeching the restless “animal” to be calm and to lie down (fig. 5). Some of these amulets also bear the image of Medusa, the sea monster with snakes for hair who petrified sailors with a single glance. The Greek demigod Perseus succeeded in beheading Medusa – with the aid of a mirror, he tricked her into turning herself into stone. The head of Medusa, with its grotesquely bulging protrusions, became a visualisation of the uterus that had to be controlled.



5. Byzantine amulet to conjure the womb. London, British Museum, inv. nr. 1938
© The Trustees of the British Museum.

In folk art, the uterus is often depicted as a sphere with thorny protrusions, also referred to as “teeth” or “spikes” (fig. 6). These remarkable objects, almost weapons, familiar from ethnographic collections, comprise an *Ersatz* for the female organ that miraculously expands and shrinks yet also causes suffering and even death. Manifestations of the uterus as spiky sphere were also observed in nature: in hedgehogs, pinecones, nut husks and in the branches of blood coral, given as amulets to protect mother and babe.



JOURNALS OF THE

The following is a transcription of the handwritten journal entries of the crew members on the Mars lander. The entries are dated from the day of landing through the end of the mission.

The crew members on the Mars lander recorded the following observations and activities during their mission. The entries provide a detailed account of the challenges they faced and the scientific discoveries they made.





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