Doing It by the Book: Teaching Sexuality in the Twelfth-Century Classroom

by

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Abstract

This dissertation demonstrates the extent to which concepts of sexuality were intertwined with teaching and learning in twelfth-century French schools, making a vital connection between the history of education and that of gendered sexuality. Learning, enculturation and socialization were combined in the new urban schools of the twelfth century, in which boys underwent rigorous grammatical and moral training while forming homosocial bonds with their classmates and teachers. Students in their early- to mid-teens would routinely read sexually explicit texts, such as Ovid’s *Ars amatoria* and *Remedia amoris*, Terence’s *Eunuchus*, Statius’ *Achilleid*, and Juvenal’s satires, as part of their training in Latin literacy. These classical Latin texts were categorized by medieval teachers as “ethical” despite the fact that they contain depictions of rape, adultery, prostitution, cross-dressing and male sodomy. I argue that such discussions of sexuality were incorporated into the program of *mores* which traditionally accompanied
early education in *grammatica*. My research presents a new perspective on socialization in medieval schools, using classroom texts and commentaries which have rarely been examined as sources for the history of sexuality.

Starting with an overview of the role of the medieval school in male social formation, I uncover the pedagogical discourse which connects grammar with sexuality, and with the sexual status of the medieval adolescent student. While Ovid identifies himself as a schoolteacher and establishes “rules” for love and sex with the help of his medieval commentators, and Alan of Lille describes sexual deviance as the result of mislearning the “grammar” of sex, Statius and Terence highlight the inherent gender fluidity and erratic sexual behaviour of adolescent boys, casting doubt on the stability of the boundaries established by such regulatory mechanisms. Juvenal and his twelfth-century commentators add to this discourse by implying that male sodomy is taught through homosocial networks, and by identifying adolescent boys as especially prone to learning sodomy, with the school as the site of particular anxiety. These perspectives reflect twelfth-century anxieties about clerical celibacy and homosociality and demonstrate a medieval recognition of the social forces which underpin both education and sexuality.
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Introduction

This dissertation examines teaching materials from twelfth-century French classrooms as a source for cultural history, connecting the history of education with that of gender and sexuality. The body of evidence represented by school texts and glosses has traditionally been read primarily for information about the theorization and teaching of grammar in medieval schools. Many glosses and commentaries on the classical *auctores* are aimed at a relatively low reading level, and contain explanations modern scholars consider erroneous; these combined factors account for a general lack of interest by either classicists or medievalists in examining the content of these commentaries in detail.¹ But these texts do not only give us important information about the medieval interpretation of classical texts, and the teaching of grammar, they also give us access to classroom practice, and the medieval approach to the inscription of cultural values through education. All education, medieval and modern, involves a process of enculturation, whereby students learn the skills, behaviours, and attitudes which are socially expedient for their time and place.² This dissertation will read *auctores* texts and glosses, and the implications of medieval education for the modern classroom.

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¹ Perhaps such work will become more common as glossed manuscripts become more widely available through digitization, or as editions of glosses and commentaries become more widespread.

² See my discussion of the social functions of education and the “hidden curriculum” in Chapter One.
their medieval commentaries as “barometers of cultural values and attitudes” relating to sexuality.³

Reading across a variety of twelfth-century French auctores texts and their commentaries, I will demonstrate the presence of distinct but related discussions of bodies and desires which frame sexuality as a collection of ideas and acts taught and learned through social networks. This process of learning is described in school texts and commentaries in terms which are intertwined with medieval notions of schooling, and especially with grammatica, which encompasses grammar, the development of literary appreciation or taste, and moral instruction. This association sometimes causes slippage between notions of sex and those of scholastic disciplina, or the rules of grammar, as medieval interpretations of Ovid’s Ars amatoria and Remedia amoris show, and Juvenal implicates the school itself as a site of sexual instruction. The importance of learning a correct sexual performance is constantly haunted by the parallel possibility of learning variant or deviant sexualities, a source of much anxiety in Alan of Lille’s De planctu Naturae, which also demonstrates a number of overlaps between twelfth-century notions of grammar and sex. This anxiety is heightened for adolescents, whose inherent irrationality and gender- and sexuality- based “slipperiness” is demonstrated in Statius’

*Achilleid* and Terence’s *Eunuch*. This “slipperiness”, combined with the fact that the homosocial environment of the school was thought to allow for, and possibly encourage, sex between male students (or between students and teachers), means that students are identified as especially prone to male “sodomy”, as the commentaries to Juvenal demonstrate. The many connections between sexual *habitus* and formal schooling in this body of texts inscribe sex as a subject to be mastered and as a learned performance, but the curriculum also demonstrates how fragile such regulatory structures can be, and how easy it is to mis-learn or destabilize normative sexualities.

**School texts as cultural history**

The idea that school texts are documents of cultural practices and values is widely acknowledged in studies on the history of medieval education which focus on religious, especially monastic, training. The purpose of all instruction in *grammatica* was, ultimately, to prepare students for increasingly advanced readings of the Bible, proceeding through four modes of interpretation: literal, allegorical, tropological and anagogical. The reading of the *auctores* is associated with the lowest levels of education, and with the simplest mode of reading, the literal, which constitutes a boundary, not only between religious and pagan texts, but between the lower stages of education and
the more advanced, and thus between childhood and adulthood. While Augustine’s model of reading the auctores as “the despoiling of the Egyptians” (whereby the “pagan” nature of the auctores is essentially neutralized through reading strategies which render them “religiously benign but textually useful to the Christian community” persists in medieval discourse on education, by the twelfth century there is little evidence of widespread Christianizing strategies in the commentary tradition. The readings given in twelfth-century accessus and commentaries rarely gesture towards this instrumental or intermediate nature of the auctores, but treat each text as a copious record of language, culture and auctoritas. Because the auctores were read at a fairly early stage of education, comprehension of the text itself, or the intentio of the author, is the focus of many commentaries, and the attention given to each line of text means that by modern standards, “the interpretations [in school commentaries] are if


6 Bernard Silvestris’ allegorizing commentary on the Aeneid is often cited as an example of a Christianizing reading of the auctores, but this was not a widespread trend for the elementary stages of education. See Reynolds’ discussion of “Chartrian” models of commentary in Suzanne Reynolds, Medieval Reading: Grammar, Rhetoric and the Classical Text (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 140-144. Reynolds contrasts the allegorizing approach associated with the school of Chartres with the commentaries on Horace she has examined, suggesting that satire’s lack of integumentum gave it license to be read literally. But similarly non-allegorizing, or “literal” approaches can be found in all of the commentaries noted in this dissertation, suggesting that this trend has less to do with the nature of satire than with the ability of the student readers.
anything too literal". What is a disadvantage from the perspective of scholars who wish to investigate medieval notions of genre or literature is an advantage for the purposes of this dissertation, because the "literal" nature of enarratio means that teachers must confront the content of the base text, even at its most sexually explicit, without resorting to allegory.

Despite this advantage, the Roman auctores have rarely been studied as documents of culture, except as documents of the culture of grammatical pedagogy in medieval schools. Reynolds’ study of eleventh- and twelfth-century commentaries on Horace traces a history of reading practice and of teaching, but frames Horace’s text as effectively transformed by its role in the teaching of grammatica into a text to which the term “hermeneutics” cannot apply. Reynolds echoes the Augustinian approach to the auctores when she insists on their “fundamentally ancillary” role in the early stages of grammatica which lead up to scriptural interpretation. Hexter similarly refers to the “value-free” instructional function of texts like the Ars amatoria in his work on the study


8 Reynolds, Medieval Reading, 11-13 and especially 12n25, in which she remarks that Copeland’s “insistence on calling the work of interpretation hermeneutics effectively conceals the fact that it is part of grammatica”.

9 Ibid., 12.
of Ovid in medieval schools. Such comments ignore the notion that a text could be read in a number of ways simultaneously – while many glosses on the auctores are indeed aimed at lexical and syntactical aspects of the base text, many others show unique insights into the social, historical, or moral context of the situations described in the text, gesturing towards a tradition of “ethical reading” which is equally folded into the study of grammatica. Furthermore, even the most basic elements of commentary, such as paraphrase or lexical substitution, serve to rewrite the text, but the manner in which they do so and the underlying assumptions of such rewritings – their hermeneutical status – is often overlooked. As Irvine has remarked, students of medieval grammatica gained a specific kind of literacy which served a wide variety of social functions beyond the subject matter of the discipline itself. It does not make sense to see the medieval “grammatical” approach to the auctores as one which

10 Hexter, Ovid and Medieval Schooling, 25.

11 See my discussion in Chapter Two below.

12 See Rita Copeland, Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 83-4. While Copeland’s argument here is meant to investigate the implications of commentary’s own discursive action, not the readings it produces of other texts (which is my focus in this dissertation), her observation about paraphrase demonstrates one of many hidden, yet productive, functions of commentary which are ignored by Hexter and Reynolds.

13 Irvine, Making of Textual Culture, 20-1.
subordinates questions of textual interpretation to those of linguistic orthodoxy – both aspects serve an important social function.

The belief that the association between *grammatica* and the *auctores* turns these texts into mere grammatical exercises or extended glossaries perhaps accounts for the fact that school texts are very rarely studied as sources for the history of sexuality and gender. One exception is Baldwin’s *The Language of Sex*, which identifies five discourses, including medical, scholarly, courtly and popular discourses, whose interactions in the production of knowledge around sexuality are explored based on themes such as marriage, desire, and the sexual body.\(^\text{14}\) Baldwin’s analysis of *quaestiones* and commentaries from the classroom of Peter the Chanter and of Capellanus’ *De amore* (as representative of an “Ovidian” discourse based on the reading of Ovid in twelfth-century schools) demonstrates some of the ways in which teachers could reflect wider cultural trends, new and old. If Baldwin had been less hesitant, as a historian, to engage with the newly evolving critical theory around sexuality he might have uncovered even richer possibilities, and queerer resonances, in his chosen material.\(^\text{15}\)

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\(^{15}\) See Baldwin’s discussion of his methodology, *Language of Sex*, xxi-xxviii. Baldwin’s somewhat circular discussion of the relationship of “cultural constructs” to “biological reality” (xxii-xxiii), for example, could benefit from a closer reading of Butler, or even of Foucault. There is also very little theorization, and almost no mention, of sex between people of the same gender in the book, although later studies such
Woods have each brilliantly demonstrated some of the ways in which school texts and commentaries can illuminate medieval notions of gender and sexuality, but these sources are still consulted only rarely in the field of the history of sexuality, which is still mainly comprised of studies of the representation of sexuality in medieval (often vernacular) literary sources, the regulation of sexuality in legal or religious contexts, and medical constructions of sexuality. The study of school texts and commentaries can add an important dimension to these studies, because school texts constitute a body of evidence whose educational purpose and readership is well-documented and whose distribution is wider than many other kinds of text. Furthermore, the institutional context and the long history of prestige associated with the auctores means that the

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as Jordan’s *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Society* have shown that there was a significant theological discourse on this subject (and Boswell had already presented a wealth of material from the twelfth century relating to sex between men). See Mark D. Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

cultural force of these texts, read and memorized during a formative period for students, was very great, and this canonicity lends a special significance to the depictions, explanations, and evaluations of sexuality in school texts and glosses.

From curriculum to classroom

The medieval auctores curriculum has a long, relatively stable history which can sometimes serve to conceal the elasticity and variation of its use by teachers in different times and places. Initial surveys based on extant manuscripts, library lists, and teachers’ descriptions of their own pedagogy have shown that a group of texts known as the auctores became fairly standard from an early date and remained so, with slight variations, through the twelfth century. Early medieval curricula incorporated texts which were already standard in Roman education, such as Virgil’s Aeneid and the works of Horace, with their late antique commentaries, alongside the works of Christian authors such as Prudentius, Arator and Juvenecus. Early medieval teachers also began to use Latin texts in their classrooms which were not commonly taught in Roman schools,

such as Ovid’s amatory works, and to produce their own original commentaries.\textsuperscript{18} The set of canonical \textit{auctores} in use by the early twelfth century is a product of the gradual incorporation of more and more classical Latin reading material into a system of education which was itself undergoing profound changes, as I discuss in Chapter One. The twelfth-century commentary tradition on the classics reflects a similar trend, as commentators attempted to address a history of commentaries and glosses spanning nearly a thousand years while still incorporating their own interpretations of the text. Aimeric’s \textit{Ars lectoria} (c. 1086) classifies a range of school authors as “gold”, “silver” “tin” and “lead”, depending on their prestige and utility for schooling. Aimeric’s gold authors are Terence, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Sallust, Lucan, Statius, Juvenal and Persius. Aimeric puts these texts in a pagan “gold” category, parallel to the Christian “gold” works, which are the books of the Bible dictated by God himself, and which he calls “autentici” and “canonicos”.\textsuperscript{19} The fact that the \textit{auctores} are in a category parallel to such important biblical texts is a testament to the cultural capital they represent. Munk Olsen’s survey of manuscripts shows that the texts by these “gold” authors are indeed

\textsuperscript{18} One of the earliest glossed copies of any work of Ovid is the \textit{Ars amatoria} in the ninth-century English “Classbook of St Dunstan”. See Hexter, \textit{Ovid and Medieval Schooling} for the teaching of Ovid in medieval schools.

\textsuperscript{19} Harry F. Reijnders, “Aimericus, Ars lectoria (3)” \textit{Vivarium} 10: 2 (1972), 168-170. These two Latin terms are difficult to translate because they relate to the theological and legal force of these biblical texts - my best effort would be “authoritative” and “prestigious”. 
the most frequently copied between the ninth and twelfth centuries.\textsuperscript{20} As he points out, the existence of a copy of a given text does not necessarily entail its use in a classroom, but given the cost of copying an entire text or set of texts with accompanying glosses, the likelihood is that a manuscript of a classical text with marginal or interlinear glosses (and/or neums) was intended for practical use, probably by a teacher.\textsuperscript{21} The texts which are the focus of this dissertation – Ovid’s \textit{Ars amatoria} and \textit{Remedia amoris}, Statius’ \textit{Achilleid}, Terence’s \textit{Eunuchus} and Juvenal’s satires – are all written by these canonical \textit{auctores} and have commentary traditions that span the late antique and medieval eras.\textsuperscript{22}

But when we move from establishing the fact that classical texts were a major part of medieval education to investigating how they were taught, the situation becomes much more tenuous. Aside from a number of idealized and highly theoretical outlines of pedagogy such as those in Hugh of St Victor’s \textit{Didascalicon} (or the \textit{Didascalicon} of Conrad of Hirsau) we have very few sources which document day to day procedures in

\textsuperscript{20} See Munk Olsen, “La popularité des textes”, 177, for a chart of classical texts found in more than fifty manuscripts prior to the thirteenth century.

\textsuperscript{21} Munk Olsen, \textit{I classici}, 9-10. cf Gernot Wieland, “The Glossed Manuscript: Classbook or Library Book?” \textit{Anglo-Saxon England} 14 (1985), 153-173. Many of Wieland’s observations are not relevant to the materials examined in this dissertation because these are generally commentaries by a known teacher or late antique commentaries which had become standard for use in the classroom, but some of the questions he raises would become important in undertaking further work on the more obscure commentaries and glossed copies of the classics from the twelfth century.

\textsuperscript{22} The transmission history of each text and its attendant commentary tradition will be discussed in detail in the relevant chapters below.
the twelfth-century classroom. A notable exception is John of Salisbury’s description of Bernard of Chartres’ classroom (Met 1.24), which includes an account of students working on compositions and sharing them with one another, as well as listening to Bernard lecture on the auctores and memorizing key points of the lesson to be recited the following day. Bernard’s classroom was clearly made up of students of different ages or levels, since John mentions a variety of teaching styles, from the “prima rudimenta” of basic grammar lessons to more advanced discussions of style and composition.

John also provides an account of Bernard’s enarratio poetarum, a traditional way of lecturing on the auctores, explaining that Bernard taught his students “in auctorum lectione quid simplex esset, et ad imaginem regulae positum [...] figuras grammaticae, colores rhetoricos, cavillationes sophismatum, et qua parte sui propositae lectionis articulus respiciebat ad alias disciplinas” [what was clearly written, and reflected the rules [of grammar or style], in the course of reading the auctores [...] and the figures of grammar, rhetorical colours, and sophistic banter, and how one part of the reading he was undertaking related to other disciplines] (Met 1.24). This process of enarratio was of fundamental importance to the teaching of grammatica from the Roman period through the twelfth century. 23 Enarratio was a “literal” reading aimed at enabling students to

23 While John of Salisbury and his contemporaries claim that this approach was growing old-fashioned, many twelfth-century commentaries show that traditional enarratio was still very common. See Mia
construe the basic meaning of each line of the text of the *auctores*, but the readings provided through *enarratio* often become encyclopedic (as John of Salisbury implied in his description above), incorporating material from the *quadrivium* or explanations of Roman and medieval cultural traditions and beliefs.

John of Salisbury’s description of Bernard’s classroom leaves the modern scholar of education with many unanswered questions about the practicalities of teaching, but the most pressing is this: how much of the *auctores* was actually read aloud and discussed in detail in the classroom? The body of literature comprised by the “gold” authors alone – only the poets, not including Statius’ *Achilleid*, and with the *Metamorphoses* as the sole work of Ovid included – amounts to 62,000 lines of Latin verse if each text were read from beginning to end.24 Munk Olsen estimates that if a master could teach one hundred lines a day (every day but Sundays) it would take three years to cover the major Roman authors alone (without reading any Christian texts), leading him to call the reading list laid out in most medieval pedagogical texts “un programma poco

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realistico”. Wieland calculates an even smaller number of lines per day based on English monastic practices – setting aside religious festival days and Sundays, he calculates that a master would dictate only thirty to forty lines a day, which his students would then copy onto their wax tablets to memorize; thus, it would take an entire year to read through the *Aeneid* alone. But as Wieland and Munk Olsen both acknowledge, it would be quite unusual for a student to read through the entirety of all of the authors listed above. The evidence of glossed manuscripts and commentaries shows that the first few books or sections of longer classical texts are usually the most heavily glossed, suggesting that these were the parts students most often read in detail. Florilegia could provide students with selections of the most relevant or famous quotations from later sections of classical texts they might not have time to encounter in their daily classroom reading. Shorter texts like the *Achilleid* (1128 lines) and the *Ars* (three books of 700-800 lines each) and *Remedia* (814 lines) would have been much easier to read all the way through accompanied by a detailed *enarratio*.

The amount students read, and how they read it, would have been closely linked to their age and level of education. Unfortunately, medieval sources do not contain extensive details on the exact levels and ages of students, suggesting that students’

25 Ibid., 51.
progress was highly individualized. Model curricula outline a progression from shaping letters and reciting psalms in the earliest stages (around age six or seven), to the study of basic grammar and the reading of the *auctores* (from age seven to fourteen or so), to more advanced studies of all seven liberal arts (from fourteen on?), which could include revisiting *auctores* texts read at the lower levels with new hermeneutical or rhetorical approaches, but which became increasingly focused on the study of biblical and theological works at the most advanced levels of education. As Münster-Swendsen points out, these age limits were not strictly adhered to, and in practice teachers often taught mixed groups of students who were at various levels, giving them different tasks relating to the same material, so that it is difficult to determine the age of students reading a given text. Furthermore, as any scholar who has read through a twelfth-century Latin commentary knows, it is also quite difficult to determine the level of reader a commentary is geared towards, because most contain a range of material of varying complexity, from simple lexical and grammatical explanations and summaries of key plot points, to short lessons on Roman myths or cultural practices, to

27 For an overview of the early stages of education, see Suzanne Reynolds, *Medieval Reading*, 7-11; for an in-depth study of how the same text could be read at different levels of education, see Marjorie Curry Woods, “A Medieval Rhetoric Goes to School - and to the University: the Commentaries on the *Poetria nova*” *Rhetorica* 9:1 (1991), and *Classroom Commentaries: Teaching the “Poetria nova” Across Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2010).

identifications and discussions of rhetorical and poetic devices, and ethical observations.

These considerations mean that for any commentary, and any auctores text, there is a range of possibilities in terms of who was teaching it and who was reading it. This dissertation focuses on students in the intermediate stage of education, who were reading through the auctores after learning the rudiments of grammar. I have chosen to focus on this “level”, loosely defined, because classical texts were especially important at this stage, and it was likely the level of education attained by the largest proportion of students, with only very few pursuing the most advanced studies.29 These adolescent or preadolescent students were pursuing a painstaking study of the auctores in order to obtain their own share of the cultural prestige associated with such texts, and with the rigorous education in grammatica provided in medieval schools.

Commentators as teachers, students as readers

One of the basic premises of this thesis is that the commentaries and glosses to auctores texts examined here are representative of classroom teaching.30 As I outlined above,  

29 See my discussion in Chapter One.
30 The terms “commentary” and “gloss” will be used in a fairly straightforward sense in this dissertation. A “gloss” is an annotation to a line or word of the base text, either on the manuscript of the base text itself (marginal and interlinear glosses) or in an independently circulating commentary. I consider a commentary to be a set of glosses on a given text which can appear in manuscripts of the base text (in the
historians of education have access to very few sources which document daily practice in the classroom, and school texts, which exist in hundreds of manuscripts, represent a body of evidence which has barely been explored. Reynolds has persuasively argued that certain kinds of glossing represent a vestige of the “professional reading” done by medieval teachers on behalf of their students.31

I view this body of commentary as material which had the potential to be presented in the classroom, but I do not argue that each line of commentary was read aloud or discussed every time a text was taught. Many commentaries and glosses are designed to allow the teacher to choose the option he thinks is most convincing, most correct, or one which he thinks his students are most likely to understand, at a given time and place, by providing a series of possible readings of a line of text or combining glosses from a variety of sources. For the purposes of this dissertation, it does not much matter whether the teacher using a certain manuscript composed or compiled the glosses

form of marginal and/or interlinear glosses) or as a separately circulating entity (for example, in the case of the commentaries on Ovid’s Ars amatoria examined in Chapter Two). As will become clear below, I will not be engaging in a discussion of how and why marginal or interlinear glosses can be identified as a commentary written by a single teacher, or how modern classifications align with the plethora of technical medieval terms for textual annotations; I prefer to approach a given set of glosses as a “snapshot” of possibilities for the teacher, regardless of the authorship and provenance of the glosses themselves. cf Wieland’s approach in “The Glossed Manuscript”.

31 Reynolds, Medieval Reading, 28-30.
himself, or whether he was using a blend of materials both personal and borrowed: my focus is on the content of these materials and their cultural implications, given the fact that the possibilities presented in the glosses are licensed for use in the classroom. Many individual glosses provide a series of vastly different explanations of the base text separated merely by “vel” [or]. For example, a twelfth-century commentary on Juvenal offers an array of possible connotations for the name “Massa” (mentioned in passing at Sat 1.35):

vel sit proprium nomen; vel per Massam quemlibet divitem accipe propter massam pecunie; vel Massa, id est multitudo populi; vel sit pupilli nomen, vel sit appellativum, quod a caris amicis accipiebat.  

[ it is a proper name; or, by “Massa” understand some kind of riches, like a “mass” of money; or, “Massa”, that is, a multitude of people; or it is the name of a ward/orphan, or it is a nickname he got from his dear friends]

In this case, the first explanation is probably the most correct – a modern edition of Juvenal notes that “Massa” refers to “Baebius Massa”, an informer to Domitian. But the other possibilities convey important information about how the medieval commentator frames the significance of a name: it can be hereditary, descriptive, or given to a person through several means, and a proper name can be interchangeable with a noun (the commentator explains that “Massa” could mean “multitudo”). This


example is typical in that the commentator does not express a preference for a certain explanation, but presents a series of undifferentiated possibilities. The teacher making use of the commentary might discuss one or several of these possibilities depending on his time constraints and inclination.

While Reynolds is convincing in her discussion of glosses as a representation of the activity of teachers, the student is notably absent in her account of the medieval classroom, due to her insistence that, as “an expert reader”, the teacher “painstakingly mediates the text for a specific purpose”.34 According to Reynolds, neither the student nor the teacher is a “reader” in the modern sense, because the teacher’s glosses do not reflect “an individual’s interests and desires” but his pedagogical purpose as a grammarian, tailored to the abilities of his students, and the student is merely the audience for the teacher’s reading and the receptacle for the information conveyed by the teacher.35

Reynolds was absolutely correct to observe that the term “reader” should not be used trans-historically, and her work on reading practice as evidenced in the twelfth-century glosses to Horace is meticulous. But the model of teaching she presents, in which the

34 Reynolds, Medieval Reading, 31.
teacher has absolute control over the interpretive possibilities of the text, and can more or less void the text of its content through the deployment of the techniques of *grammatica*, seems needlessly restrictive, considering the wide variety of reading strategies evident in the twelfth-century glosses examined for this dissertation.

Reynolds explains that she wishes to correct a trend in modern literary and book-historical criticism in which “the role of the reader in constructing meaning out of texts is increasingly taken for granted”⁴⁶, and perhaps as a result of this places excessive limits on the interpretation done by medieval teachers and students. Even if students did not themselves “read”, they did hear and memorize stories, exempla and proverbs which were simultaneously grammatical and ethical. The “ethical” reading of the *auctores*, as I will suggest in Chapter Two, means that students had to internalize and reflect upon the examples of social behaviour presented in the *auctores* in order to redeploy them, either as models for their own writing, or for their own behaviour. Although this process is based on shared understandings of the *auctores* put forth by the teacher, students could also generate new meanings and contexts for the *auctores*, using names and phrases from their school texts in playful and creative ways in their own writing. In the course of this dissertation, I will present a variety of examples of medieval anxieties about the possibility of mis-learning, or of adapting what has been

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learned, and the (anxiety-fraught) role of teachers in maintaining social stability, showing that Reynolds’ model of teaching and learning elides the dynamism that was present in medieval accounts of education.

**Theorizing sexuality and schooling**

We must not place sex on the side of reality, and sexuality on that of confused ideas and illusions; sexuality is a very real historical formation; it is what gave rise to the notion of sex, as a speculative element necessary to its operation.

- Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*[^37]

Foucault’s insistence that sexuality is a product of the discourses, customs, institutions, regulations and knowledge which define the possibilities of sex makes the definition of either term for the purposes of historical research extremely challenging. Notions of gender, biologically defined sex, the acts which constitute sex, and the relationships of each of these to one another and to socially regulated frameworks like medicine, religion and the law, or to less formal social traditions and beliefs, are subject to different definitions depending on the historical time period and segment of culture under examination. As if this were not complicated enough, Sedgwick reminds us that past conceptual models of sexuality do not disappear when later models seem to supercede them, but that a careful examination of any given discourse can reveal “the

relations enabled by the unrationalized coexistence of different models”.  

38 Foucault’s notion that the history of sexuality is not one of “bodies and pleasures” but of the cultural production of knowledge, bodies, acts and identities means that we must pay special attention to the historically constituted ways sex is brought into discourse and to the interaction of these forms of discourse; for this dissertation, this is not merely a question of the multivalence of language itself, but an indication of how people in the past reflected and expressed cultural models of sexuality. The combination of ethics, grammar, and sexuality through educational institutions presents a seemingly perfect union of Foucaultian constructs of power, knowledge and bodies. A key difference between my approach in this dissertation and a typically Foucaultian approach, however, is that I am not interested in confession as a defining mode of sexual discourse. In Foucault’s later work, confession comes increasingly to signify a shift in Western Christian culture away from late antique notions of “care of the self” towards a more submissive self-monitoring which requires the supervision of experts (from priests to modern psychoanalysts) who accept the subject’s confession.  

39 This emphasis on confession arises because of Foucault’s focus on the conceptual archaeology of

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38 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Epistemology of the Closet (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 47. This is especially relevant to the study of the auctores in the classroom, because of the uneasy coexistence of Roman and medieval notions of gender and sexuality in the texts and commentaries.

present-day psychoanalysis in the first volume of the *History of Sexuality*. Unlike Foucault, I do not take psychoanalysis as a starting point, and thus am less concerned with the confessional impetus to speak about sex than with the forces of power-knowledge which create the medieval subject’s notions of sex in the first place. This has caused me to uncover a different strain of discourse in the history of sexuality, the embedding of sex within formal education, something which Foucault acknowledges in Greek society, but not in his extant work on medieval society.40

Foucault describes his project in the *History of Sexuality* as an examination of the way sex is put into discourse, including “the institutions which prompt people to speak about it and which store and distribute the things that are said.”41 The current study focuses mainly on this last aspect of sexuality’s history, the storage and distribution of cultural truths about sex, something which Foucault attempted for the classical period in the extant parts of his *History* but never completed for the medieval period. The current project attempts to trace some forms of “truth” about sex perpetuated in schools (“truths” or notions which might later arise in confession or not, but which nevertheless


41 Foucault, *History of sexuality* vol. 1, 11.
inform the subject’s understanding of desires and pleasures), and the “polymorphous techniques” through which these truths are constructed and transmitted in the classroom.\textsuperscript{42} I take a broadly queer approach in that I attempt not to collapse or over-determine links made in the texts and commentaries between the bodies, acts, personal characteristics, and social roles that constitute sex and sexuality, but to allow for a multiplicity of connections and definitions as they appear in the historical material under examination. It is not my project to “queer” this canon, but, inspired by Sedgwick, to show that this canon is already queer, in that it contains instabilities, gaps, and contradictions even within the regulatory frameworks it proposes for defining and containing sexuality.\textsuperscript{43}

Some of the texts I have chosen for this project are those which medieval teachers identified as relating to sexual acts and customs – the \textit{Ars amatoria} was widely considered to be a manual for the seduction of women and was the subject of some debate amongst teachers, as I will show in Chapter Two; a major theme of Juvenal’s satires was illicit sex between men, which was amply recognized and discussed by

\textsuperscript{42}Ibid., 11.

\textsuperscript{43} Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, \textit{Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire} (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 17. Sedgwick remarks that her project is not to construct a separate male-homosocial literary canon for English literature, but to show that the existing canon is already such a canon.
teachers in their *accessus* and commentaries. Other texts, like the *Achilleid* and *Eunuchus*, have a special relevance for twelfth-century student readers because they present depictions of the sexuality and gender of adolescent boys. In reading these texts and their commentaries, I have directed special attention towards the ways in which men’s behaviour is addressed and critiqued. The *auctores* curriculum displays a dazzling variety of representations and demonstrations of the misogynistic and patriarchal frameworks through which the sexual domination of women is perpetuated as an important aspect of masculinity, and contains characterizations of women’s sexuality which reinforce their subordinate social status, but since schoolboys were, at least temporarily, alienated from real women, I have decided to focus on those aspects of the curriculum which privilege the actions and desires of men. An important function of medieval education was the teaching of *mores* – through their readings of the *auctores* boys would learn to scrutinize their own behaviour and that of other men, and to bond through shared vocabularies and understandings of textualized desire. The meanings created between men, between boys, and between students and teachers, as they read about sexuality are my focus here.

44 The many depictions of women as sexual actors and as objects of sexual desire in the *auctores*, and the opinions and information about many aspects of women’s sexuality provided in commentaries, has not been undertaken in a large-scale survey and was too vast a topic to undertake in my work here, but would be an important complement to the work begun in this project.
Doing it by the book: an outline

Chapter One provides an overview of the social factors inherent in twelfth-century French education, providing a background for my readings of school texts. Twelfth-century Northern France was the site of rapid expansion of educational institutions as a result of the reforms begun in the previous century to both monasteries and ecclesiastical organization. These schools attracted a large number of students who hoped to improve or secure their social position through education, taking advantage of a new demand for literate clergy both within the church and at secular courts. But despite changes in the format and demand for schooling, schools themselves embodied a long tradition of enculturation, stemming from Roman traditions, which entwined literacy, mastery, masculinity and male bonding (leading Ong to refer to medieval and Renaissance education as a “puberty rite”), and it is important to recognize this context for readings of sexuality in the classroom. Chapter Two introduces the notion that discussions of sex formed a part of the “ethical reading” practiced in medieval schools. The unruly nature of sexual behaviour was seen with some anxiety, however, and the use of Ovid’s *Ars amatoria* and *Remedia amoris* served to stabilize and encode rules for gendered sexual performance as explained by an expert *magister*, similar to the rules of grammar as explained by the *magistri* of the schools, a parallel which is taken up by the twelfth-century teacher Alan of Lille in his *De planctu Naturae*. Chapter Three examines the characterization and interpretation of male adolescent sexuality in Statius’ *Achilleid*
and Terence’s *Eunuchus*, in which the fragility of adolescent gender performance is linked to sexual and social immaturity. Juvenal’s satires complement this depiction by demonstrating how easily adolescent boys can learn to enjoy and practice illicit sexual habits, especially sex between men, and Juvenal’s medieval commentators link these depictions with twelfth-century anxieties about teaching and learning in the urban schools. These chapters will demonstrate that twelfth-century schools engaged with sexuality in a variety of contexts as part of students’ moral and cultural education.
Chapter 1
Twelfth-century education and society

Schooling was an important rite of passage for medieval boys. Children would enter school at age 6 or 7, and after mastering basic literacy and numeracy, would move on to an intermediate stage where the intricacies of grammar and style were explored in more depth. As I explained in the Introduction, children between the ages of 8 and 14 would begin to read a canonical set of texts, the Latin *auctores*, as the basis of this intermediate curriculum. The reading of the *auctores* was intended to be deeply foundational to the student’s understanding of both reading and writing; as Irvine has remarked, the study of *grammatica* tended to “perpetuate and reproduce the most fundamental conditions for textual culture, providing the discursive rules and interpretive strategies that constructed certain texts as repositories of authority and value”.

Thus, in many ways literacy was itself identified with knowledge of canonical texts: students would commit large sections of the *auctores* to memory as part of their lessons, and often drew on these memories to attribute additional authority to their own writings, which is evidenced by the vast amount of quotation from classical authors found in many different styles of medieval writing. Imitation of the *auctores* was also encouraged, leading to the adaptation of classical genres and rhetorical features into new forms written in

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1 It is difficult to know the exact ages of the boys at the various stages of education because this is seldom mentioned by educators or recorded in documents; see the Introduction for my discussion of the curriculum for various stages of learning.

medieval Latin. Thus, the *auctores* curriculum helped to provide a vocabulary, both literal and conceptual, with which students could express themselves in writing, and incubate a specific form of literacy which was connected to a wider system of social relations.

The reading of the *auctores*, in itself a formative experience intended to leave a permanent mark on the student, was only one part of a broader process of social formation which occurred via the process of schooling. The image of a seal pressing into wax, or of wax fitting into a mold, is a common metaphor used by teachers to describe the effects of proper education. Teachers aimed not only to impart specific knowledge or skills, but to reinforce appropriate behaviour, so that students would be “stamped” with socially relevant norms. This dissertation examines the ways in which the reading of the *auctores* allowed for discussions of sexuality to become part of this program of social and cultural indoctrination undertaken in medieval schools. Training in grammar, including the reading of the *auctores*, took place in school environments which encouraged social bonding amongst students, and between students and teachers, bonds which could be very significant socially and personally. The twelfth-century classroom, as a (homo)social environment, demonstrates multivalent

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3 Quintilian (*Inst.* 1.1.36) uses the metaphor of soft wax to describe the mind of impressionable students; the positive quality of soft wax is that it can easily be shaped or pressed with a seal. Medieval authors, from Anselm to Vincent of Beauvais to Geoffroy of Vinsauf use this same metaphor to describe their own approach to teaching, and it can also be found in several school texts.
connections amongst the medieval cultural notions of literacy, friendship, spirituality, masculinity and sexuality. It is important to examine the nature of these connections, and the history of the socially formative environment of the school, before investigating the depiction of sexuality in classroom reading materials and the pedagogical approaches to addressing issues of male sexuality and gender in the twelfth-century classroom.

The proliferation of educational institutions during the twelfth century occurred in response to an increased demand for education, which accompanied a range of social changes including urbanization, clerical and monastic reforms, and the restructuring of ecclesiastical bureaucracy, which created new roles for literate men in the reforming church. A wide variety of schools developed as a result of this “renaissance”, differing from one another in both the format and content of teaching, as old and new institutions attempted to adapt to the needs of this influx of students. Twelfth-century students at urban schools were in the midst of an unprecedented fluidity in educational structures, including increasingly variable curricula which blended elements of traditional teaching materials and methods with new approaches. Despite these changes in the format of education, the social function of education remained largely the same. Learning, enculturation, and socialization were intertwined in the school environment, and my focus here will be the social and cultural effects of schooling which relate to the inculcation of gender identity and sexuality. These learning
environments had profound effects on students; they bonded with others in the close-knit classroom space, and defined themselves as members of an elite literate community with a shared language. As Münster-Swendsen has observed, the affective bond between teachers and students was an especially important social force in twelfth-century learning environments which lacked the more formally established statutes and guidelines of later schools. Twelfth-century students were also preparing to take on important social roles outside the classroom, including those in the secular church, monastery, and courts, so the training they received in school extended to many different environments. This chapter will introduce key elements of the process of social identity formation which was part of formal education.

1.1 From monastic to cathedral schools, and beyond

The specific historical circumstances of twelfth-century education are the result of developments over several hundred years, during which monastic schools lost their near-monopoly over the process of education, and burgeoning urban centres provided new environments in which men could undertake their education and build a shared educational culture. A brief overview of these developments is necessary in order to understand the evolving cultural environment of twelfth-century schools.

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Many surveys of twelfth-century schooling emphasize a stark divide between monastic and cathedral schools.\(^5\) This reflects a trend in twelfth-century pedagogical texts, such as Conrad of Hirsau’s *Dialogus super auctores*, which often set the two models of learning in opposition to one another in very strong terms.\(^6\) In fact, these were parallel systems of education which shared many key features, stemming from Christian educational practices established during the ninth century. French monasteries had a long history of providing basic education to local communities, either in “external” or day classrooms or to oblates and boarders living in the monastery.\(^7\) Although Charlemagne had attempted to provide a framework for “secular” education in his *Admonitio generalis* and *Epistola de litteris colendis*, establishing the importance of a literate clergy and ordering local priests to teach basic literacy in their communities, this does not seem to have occurred in a widespread fashion, and local monasteries remained important centres of


education, especially for the elementary teaching of basic literacy and numeracy.\textsuperscript{8} Some monasteries became so famous for the quality of their teaching that students would travel long distances to study specific topics, for example, law and theology with Anselm at Bec (eleventh century), classics at Fleury (ninth-tenth century), and grammar at Auxerre (ninth century).

After the reorganization of the church during the late eleventh century (often referred to as the “Gregorian” reforms, though many reforms were carried out by influential church officials and popes both before and after the papacy of Gregory VII), there was pressure on monasteries to become more focused on personal spiritual development, in a parallel movement of monastic reform which accompanied these ecclesiastical reforms. Twelfth-century monastic reforms included stricter cloistering for monks, while the church became concerned with regulating a perceived overlap in functions between monks and priests.\textsuperscript{9} The first Lateran council of 1123 (canon 17) specifies that the \textit{cura animarum} is not a matter for monks and abbots, and forbids them from performing such duties as visiting the sick, providing extreme unction, and publicly

\textsuperscript{8} Pierre Riché and Jacques Verger, \textit{Des nains sur des épaules de géants: maîtres et élèves au moyen âge} (Paris: Tallandier, 1996), 34, suggest a few regions where Carolingian secular schools operated, mostly in Northern France.

\textsuperscript{9} Delhaye, \textit{Enseignment et morale}, 5.
imposing penance or performing mass. Schooling was perhaps beginning to be thought of as an equally “public” duty to be transferred into the hands of the secular clergy.

Monasteries had already begun to narrow their focus, limiting the number of external students in monastic schools, then gradually restricting the practice of child oblation (beginning in the eleventh century), and eventually establishing higher age limits for novices. Bernard of Clairvaux summarizes the spirit of these reforms, saying “monachi non est docere sed lugere” [the monk’s duty is not teaching, but grieving], a sentiment echoed by many others, including Ivo of Chartres. Bernard’s newly-reformed order of Cistercians refused to admit children altogether, preferring that novices receive their education prior to entering the monastery; Cluniacs also began to limit the number of children they accepted, and developed special rules which applied only to children and adolescents. Young children began increasingly to be seen as a disruptive presence in monasteries, and the burden of educating young men began to be shifted elsewhere, towards cathedral chapters and other non-monastic institutions.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{10}}\text{Delhaye, Enseignement et morale, 5, notes that these sentiments probably derive from a similar remark by Jerome; presumably the monks are grieving for the state of their souls.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{11}}\text{Delhaye, Enseignement et morale, 21; Isabelle Cochelin, “Adolescence Uncloistered (Cluny, early twelfth century)”\textsuperscript{d}, in Medieval Life Cycles ed. Isabelle Cochelin and Karen Smyth (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 148-9, 154-5.}\]
Cathedral schools were not new institutions, but had existed in major centres sporadically in the early middle ages, becoming much more common in the tenth and eleventh centuries, alongside the monastic schools which flourished at that time.\textsuperscript{12} Their main function had been to train secular clergy to serve the local community, such as parish priests, and canons to serve in the cathedral. As monasteries became less willing to serve as temporary spaces in which children could learn, cathedral chapters began to take on more students, many of whom would not go on to become local priests or church officials. Barrow points out that although students had always been allowed to train outside their home diocese with the permission of the bishop, this was relatively rare until the late eleventh century, when it became much more common, explaining that this trend coincides with a point at which “churches ceased to expect that entrants into their communities should ideally undergo education within their precincts”.\textsuperscript{13} Southern has characterized this shift in the demographics of students as one focused on the desires of the individual: students in the early twelfth century “were not acting as members of a community: they were adventurers seeking rare and difficult knowledge

\footnote{12}{Julia Barrow, \textit{The Clergy in the Medieval World: Secular Clerics, their Families and Careers in North-Western Europe, c800-1200} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 186-7 lists cathedrals with active schools from the ninth and tenth centuries.}

\footnote{13}{Barrow, \textit{Secular Clerics}, 192.}
which would lead to personal advancement or the perfecting of a personal gift.”

Verger further notes that we should view these schools as a “lieu de passage” for students, and that their future after they completed their schooling was determined by a number of factors, including their own social ambitions, and those of their parents.

This suggests that the function of cathedral school education had begun to shift from practical training serving local religious needs to a more flexible kind of training which could be adapted for various environments by the individual learner. It is certainly true that the increasing breadth of education provided by late eleventh- and early twelfth-century schools did not line up with the practical requirements of likely job prospects for these men – it was too advanced. The value of this kind of education was clearly no longer directly linked to its original purpose.

Cathedral schools took on an increasingly prominent role in educating these young men, but the content of the education they received reflected a variety of previous traditions through the use of texts and commentaries which had been stable for hundreds of years. The difference between monastic and cathedral schools cannot be


15 Jacques Verger, Culture, enseignement et société en Occident aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1999), 11
established through the use of this or that text, but by an examination of the overall curriculum and the approach to it. Teachers in monastic schools tend to emphasize that the reading of the classics is a means to an end, and that “pagan” poetry is not to be enjoyed for its own sake; Roman authors are part of the Latin training necessary in order to perform accurate readings and interpretations of holy scripture. Augustine calls this approach “the despoiling of the Egyptians”, denoting the separation of the precious (grammatical) knowledge from the content of these texts, which was overwhelmingly “pagan”. 16 This is reflected in the pedagogical curriculum laid out in Conrad of Hirsau’s Dialogus super auctores (c 1130), which stresses the functional nature of classical texts as a means to an end. 17 Twelfth-century cathedral schools tended to emphasise the stylistic features of these texts as points to be emulated in the students’ own writing, and may not have been as insistent on the texts’ teleological function as training for biblical studies. But in daily practice, since these schools used many of the same commentaries, and often shared texts with one another, it is difficult to say whether these differences were primarily self-defined, and to what degree they did exist, especially at the elementary level of education. Teachers themselves could be educated in one “system” and move to the other. The deployment of quotations from

17 See n6 above.
classical texts in a wide range of medieval Latin genres, and the sophistication of such references, demonstrates that students generally were provided with far more than a merely grammatical understanding of these texts. These “Egyptians” were not easily despoiled of their context, and their cultural (rather than strictly religious) content continued to be relevant to medieval readers and writers.

Alongside the parallel environments of the cathedral (or church) and the monastery were many other options for the medieval student. The demand for education was so great that many schools in urban centres became overcrowded, and could not provide for all the students who wished to study there. Southern estimates that by 1200 there were between three and four thousand students (at various levels) in Paris alone.\(^{18}\) An agreement dated 1121 between the bishop of Paris and the canons of Notre-Dame cathedral states that “scolares externi” are no longer allowed to lodge with canons, or to have lessons in the enclosed area nearby, and that in order to avoid the disorder and noise of students coming in and out, a structure will be built adjacent to the bishop’s palace, indicating that students were beginning to be a disruptive presence in the cathedral chapter as well as the monastery.\(^{19}\) Many tutors, or small groups of teachers,

\(^{18}\) Southern, “The Schools of Paris”, 128.

\(^{19}\) B. Guérard, ed. Cartulaire de l’Eglise Notre-Dame de Paris, vol. 1 (Paris: Imprimerie de Crapelet, 1850), 339; Southern also notes that student letters from Laon indicate that there was serious overcrowding there as well, “The Schools of Paris”, 115-17 (n5, n6, n10).
also operated their own schools in their homes or in other available spaces; in Paris, schools at the Mont Ste-Geneviève and Petit Pont operated outside of the city limits where teaching was under the nominal control of the cathedral.\textsuperscript{20} Houses of canons regular, whose daily life mirrored a monastic order but who were members of the secular clergy, also provided space for the education of young boys (one of the most famous is Saint Victor, founded in Paris in 1109). All of these different environments existed in a dynamic relationship within the urban centres of Northern France, especially in twelfth-century Paris. One result of the fluidity of the educational “system” was that students could move between various environments. Students seem to make decisions based on the reputation of specific teachers – as Southern remarks, many twelfth-century students identify themselves by the names of their teachers, not the schools where they studied (\textit{Porretani, Albericani, etc}).\textsuperscript{21} John of Salisbury, for example, came to Paris as an \textit{adolescens} of 14 and studied a variety of subjects with ten different masters, over a period of several years.\textsuperscript{22} Peter of Blois received his early education at Chartres and Tours before travelling to Paris as a teenager to continue his


\textsuperscript{21} Southern, “The Schools of Paris”, 114.

\textsuperscript{22} Delhaye, \textit{Enseignement et morale}, 51-2. See also John of Salisbury, \textit{Metalogicon} 2.10.
Masters were constantly competing with one another to retain their students, and to maintain their own reputations.

Students would travel long distances to study with a particular master who was known for specific skills. In large cities like Paris this led to extreme competition for students during the twelfth century – Abelard, competing with his teacher William of Champeaux in the 1110s, describes a battle whose prize is Paris itself. Teachers and students were well aware of the activity of their peers; in fact, some teachers, like Matthew of Vendôme, incorporated their personal rivalries into their teaching materials. The *Ars versificatoria* contains a running joke about Matthew’s rival, “Rufus”, and paints a vibrant picture of the social and sexual life of his archenemy.

One of the challenges of studying medieval education prior to the thirteenth century is its profoundly “deinstitutionalized” nature. There was never centralized control over the curriculum at any stage of education, and the licensing of teachers was extremely haphazard – the introduction of *licentia docendi* had little real effect in limiting the activities of teachers, instead increasing their numbers because it was fairly easy to

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24 Southern, “The Schools of Paris”, 123.

obtain before the thirteenth century.\textsuperscript{26} Anyone with a few books and a rudimentary knowledge of Latin could gather a few private students in his own “school”, tutor the children of the nobility, or perhaps be hired as a grammar teacher in a local school attached to a church or cathedral if he had sufficient political pull or personal connections. The large body of manuscripts from the period, especially glossed manuscripts of classical Latin texts, and commentaries on those texts, speaks to this diversification of teaching. These manuscripts are problematic for the modern researcher because they generally have no scribal attributions or indications of specific provenance, and are written in hands which were quite standardized across England and Northern France during this period, so that it is difficult to situate a particular manuscript in space and time. Many of these manuscripts likely belonged to the anonymous, ordinary grammar masters whose legacy is eclipsed by that of the most famous teachers of the era, such as Peter Abelard or Bernard Silvestris. But such manuscripts record the content taught by the \textit{average} teacher to the \textit{average} student, an important (and under-studied) group of people in terms of the social history of schooling.

How much schooling did the average student receive during the twelfth century? Answering this question is a challenge due to the nature of the records left by these

\textsuperscript{26} Delhaye, \textit{Enseignement et morale}, 49-51.
schools. Evidence suggests that while advanced studies were possible prior to the foundation of major universities in the thirteenth century, most students considered them unnecessary. The cost of an extended period of time in an urban centre far from home, or even with a local tutor, discouraged all but the wealthiest students, and the most talented (who would be most likely to receive encouragement and support from their teachers). A basic knowledge of the trivium and the Latin auctores was all most boys would ever achieve, and their aim was to do so as quickly as possible, so that they could move into a changing landscape of opportunities for educated men. Thus, the reading of the auctores may have represented the pinnacle of education for many students, rather than a step in the long process described by model curricula from the twelfth century.

John of Salisbury addresses this phenomenon in his Metalogicon. He presents this work as a defence of the traditional school system, in which the study of grammar, rhetoric, and logic (also known as the trivium) are fundamental tools for every other kind of knowledge. He criticises a group of people he calls “Cornificians”, named for their (fictional) teacher, as typical representatives of the dynamic urban schools. These men prize style over content, and rush through their studies in the hopes of gaining a lucrative career by appearing educated.27 Philip of Harvengt similarly criticizes clerics

27 See John of Salisbury, Metalogicon, Book 1.
who undertake their studies with the goal of being hired by princes or kings. The goals students set for themselves during this period were clearly different from those set by their teachers.

1.2 Theorizing medieval schooling as social formation

One of the primary assumptions of this thesis is that schools are culturally formative institutions. Numerous modern studies on this topic have demonstrated the ways in which state-controlled institutions like schools perpetuate values that are socially useful, especially those values which help to maintain the social conditions which support the continued existence of the institutions themselves. The education of young children is often focused on replicating stable cultural forms and ideas through a conventional curriculum. The training of the mind and body in schools, or *habitus*, a medieval term which was repurposed by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, involves the circumscription of thought and behaviour within the boundaries of cultural frameworks, defining for the student what is possible, thinkable, and knowable. Bourdieu describes *habitus* as a structure which organizes “les pratiques et la perception des pratiques”, so that *habitus* is at work both in social practice and at the level of

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29 A classic study is Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *La reproduction : éléments pour une théorie du système d’enseignement* (Paris : Editions de Minuit, 1970) ; see also the work of Basil Bernstein, such as *Pedagogy, Symbolic Control and Identity : Theory, Research, Critique* (London : Taylor & Francis, 1996), and my discussion of a related trend, the “hidden curriculum” in Chapter 2.
internal, mental processes.\textsuperscript{30} Habitus disposes the subject towards certain patterns of behaviour, but she can adapt it depending on the field of social action in which she is situated: in this way, Bourdieu’s \textit{habitus} generates social practices of all kinds, whether licit or illicit.

Bourdieu’s concept of \textit{habitus} attempts to account for the encoding of seemingly automatic social responses and attitudes which reproduce dominant social patterns. Judith Butler sees Bourdieu’s description of \textit{habitus}, in which the body can store and act out learned models which nevertheless appear to be second nature, as closely related to her own formulation of performativity, because for Bourdieu “[t]he body does not merely act in accordance with certain regularized or ritualized practices, but it \textit{is} this sedimented ritual activity”.\textsuperscript{31} Just as Butler insists that performativity does not entail a conscious performance, Bourdieu’s conception of how \textit{habitus} is learned relies on an unconscious and ongoing process of mimesis rather than a conscious imitation.\textsuperscript{32} The development of \textit{habitus} is undertaken through formal and informal processes of learning, much of which takes place in educational institutions. Informal processes include social interactions with family members, teachers, and peers, while more formal

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item See Butler’s discussion in “Social Magie”, 115-19.
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processes include the strict enforcement of behavioural norms within learning institutions, as well as the perpetuation of cultural values through the school curriculum. Although Bourdieu tends not to address gender in his early work, his notion of the cultural reproduction of *habitus* is obviously relevant to discussions of the inculcation of gendered behaviour through formal and informal processes in the classroom, as an aspect of a broader *habitus*.

Another important concept linked to *habitus* through schooling is Bourdieu’s notion of cultural capital. The canonical status of educational institutions themselves and their traditional learning materials exist in a self-reinforcing relationship – schools create “classics” by perpetuating their survival in curricula, while “classics” are defined as texts that are taught in schools. Familiarity with these classics marks a person as educated, and in the case of medieval education, as elite, because only a very small proportion of the population had access to such an education. It is in the interests of those already educated by this system to perpetuate its value, otherwise they undermine the source of their own status. Medieval writers used references to these classical texts as signals to others of their membership in an elite group, and the ability

\[33\] As Jenkins explains, Bourdieu’s stance is that “pedagogic work legitimates its product by producing legitimate consumers of that product”, who in turn have an interest in reinforcing the value of the education they have received. Richard Jenkins, *Pierre Bourdieu* rev. ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002), 107. Irvine makes a similar observation about the reciprocal relationship between *grammatica* and canonical texts, which construct and reinforce one other’s authority, *Making of Textual Culture*, 108.
of the reader to decode or recognize these references would, in turn, identify him as a member of the same select group. The prestige associated with this type of learning is referred to in Bourdieu’s work as “cultural capital”: its value is assured by the elite nature of the schooling system which perpetuates it, limited to a small number of people who undergo a long period of extensive study.\textsuperscript{34}

Both \textit{habitus} and cultural capital seem to apply quite well to medieval schools, but there are several theoretical problems which arise if modern theories of education are applied more broadly to medieval schooling. One central problem is the complex issue of control and centralization of schools: while in the modern era curricula are state-issued, and schools are state-regulated, twelfth-century schools (and medieval schools in general) were not under centralized control and had a great amount of flexibility as to their structure and the content of their curricula. On the other hand, the creation and perpetuation of “classics” is an extremely significant function of these schools and the curriculum is broadly stable for hundreds of years, with only minor regional variations.\textsuperscript{35} Medieval schools seem to be able to accrue and distribute cultural capital

\textsuperscript{34} Bourdieu and Passeron, \textit{La reproduction}, 10.

despite the absence of a capitalist state, and if anything, the prestige associated with literacy and formal schooling is greater in medieval societies than in many modern ones. For medieval cultures, interpreting school texts “always entails promoting the power and authority of a textual community through a method of reading and interpreting an authoritative set of texts”, so that that the school texts themselves become symbols of this élite power.\textsuperscript{36}

We cannot attribute the function of medieval education directly to a state, or even to a cultural institution like the medieval church, since neither of these actively regulates education using top-down methods. Yet some aspects of the “symbolic violence” which Bourdieu describes, or in more neutral terms, the social and cultural effects of these schools, are very similar to the effects of modern schools situated within the broader control of the state.\textsuperscript{37} The values instilled during the process of education, such as religious dogma, moral instruction, and gender normative behaviour last a lifetime. Quintilian, a first-century Roman educator whose works were read throughout the

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\textsuperscript{36} Irvine, Textual Culture, 169
\textsuperscript{37} See Bourdieu and Passeron, La reproduction, 4-7 for an explanation and definition of symbolic violence.
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Middle Ages and Renaissance\textsuperscript{38}, remarks that even rote copying, which was part of the earliest stages of education, had long-lasting effects:

\ldotsii quoque versus qui ad imitationem scribendi proponentur non otiosas velim sententias habeant, sed honestum aliquid monentis. \textit{Prosequitur haec memoria in senectutem et impressa animo rudi usque ad mores proficiet. (Inst. 1.1.35-6)}

[...those verses which are given to [the student] to copy out should not have frivolous themes, but should contain moral admonitions. The memory of these lessons will follow him into his old age, and shape his morals by imprinting upon his raw soul.]

While many medieval writers acknowledge that education is socially beneficial, the educational “system” itself has no specific social mandate or goal beyond the teaching of literacy and a very broad notion of moral edification. Medieval cultural processes, influenced by ancient Roman and Greek traditions, produced schools containing embedded values and behaviours without the intervention of an overseeing body like the state. In order to account for the stability and consistency of school texts over a period of hundreds of years, we must view the process of education as social and cultural ritual which relies on codified texts and behaviours, but adapts itself to different cultural needs over time. The details of this process are hinted at in the broad changes in school environments described above, but more protracted studies of texts

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\item Complete copies of Quintilian’s \textit{Institutio oratoria} are rare prior to the fifteenth century, but as Murphy points out, the “mutilated” versions which were in circulation preserved the first two books of the work which contained Quintilian’s basic pedagogical and educational program. Twelfth-century sources such as John of Salisbury’s \textit{Metalogicon} quote Quintilian and show the influence of the first two books of the \textit{Institutio oratoria}. See James J. Murphy, \textit{Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: A History of Rhetorical Theory from St. Augustine to the Renaissance} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 123-30.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
and commentaries used in the schoolroom, in specific environments, during narrower periods of time would add greatly to our understanding of these shifting cultural functions.

The medieval school exemplifies many characteristics of Foucault’s basic concept of power, which he describes as a relationship between various kinds of cultural forces. These forces are “actions on actions” (such as inciting, permitting, limiting, making more or less possible/probable), and are thus productive of actions and thought rather than being repressive. Foucault also emphasizes that we must not seek a “central headquarters” of power, but recognize that it operates at local points. These ideas seem especially suited to explain the operation of the medieval school, positioning it as a local nexus of power relations which are productive of the minds, bodies and relationships of teachers and students. A “central headquarters” overseeing schooling need not be sought when we look at the way schools operate as formative of gendered identity.

Foucault connects power to the production of knowledge, which is most obviously applicable to schooling. Knowledge is a tangible result of the obscure, intermittent

39 Michel Foucault, “The Incitement to Discourse”, in The History of Sexuality, vol. 1, An introduction trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1990), 17-35 exemplifies Foucault’s stance on power as productive, as part of his debunking of “the repressive hypothesis”.

40 Foucault, History of Sexuality vol. 1, 93, 95.
nodal operations of power. It creates the fields of visibility (or perceptions) and forms of speech (or utterances) which actualize the potential effects of power (limiting, inciting, etc). This knowledge is stored in various institutions and can be analysed in terms of the power relations it participates in. Schools are repositories of such power-knowledge, and the bodies and minds of the people in the school environment are the sites for its actions.

This dissertation will explore some of the “polymorphous techniques” through which this power is actualized in defining, permitting, and inciting sexual performance. These effects are themselves extremely variable, both in the discourses they produce and in the ways they affect living subjects. School texts contain multiple discourses, and sites of desire, which give them their polymorphous character. With the help of both Bourdieu’s and Foucault’s theorizations, we can examine these texts as part of a system which is productive of automatic “habits” of thought and behaviour, but also as productive of a diversity of sexual subjects themselves.

41 Deleuze explains that these operations are the result of power: “ne parlant pas et ne voyant pas lui-même, il fait voir et parler”. Gilles Deleuze, Foucault (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1986), 88.
42 Foucault, History of Sexuality vol. 1, 11.
1.3 A new class of men?

Based on the evidence of manuscript production, charters, and narrative accounts, we can clearly see that the number of boys seeking education rose steeply during the twelfth century. It would be of great use to scholars to know more about the background and social class of these boys, how far they travelled, and how long they actually spent at various schools. Unfortunately, the traditional methods of social history yield disappointing results in the case of the students at cathedral schools: official records do not generally record the ages or names of students, nor their numbers or social backgrounds, making a social profile of students mostly impossible.\(^\text{43}\)

Case studies of individual scholars, such as Peter Abelard, John of Salisbury, or Peter of Blois, demonstrate the variety of environments an individual student could visit; at the same time, these men could hardly be characterised as average in terms of their ability or the level of education they attained.

Less famous students are difficult to track due to the lack of documentation of their activities both during the course of their schooling and after its completion. Baldwin has gathered some data on men who later became masters, using evidence drawn from a wide survey of documents from the late twelfth century, and has concluded that many

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\(^{43}\) Verger, *Culture et enseignement*, 12.
of these men were originally of modest means.\textsuperscript{44} For them, attending a cathedral school with the goal of teaching grammar themselves, or entering the court of a bishop or prince, was a way of improving their prospects.

Monasteries and schools had long functioned as holding zones for younger sons, those whose chances of inheriting their parents’ wealth were destroyed by the widespread adoption of primogeniture, and whose prospects of marrying were thus quite limited. These men had to find an alternative social role to play, and they often turned to the church, which had a hierarchy of available roles which was in many ways parallel to the secular hierarchy. The monastery also functioned as a safe place for a younger son, and he could always be extracted from it if he were called upon to replace a deceased older brother as heir.\textsuperscript{45} Monasteries had begun to resist these “rejected” younger sons, emphasizing a personal calling as the key factor in becoming a novice.\textsuperscript{46}

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\textsuperscript{44}John W. Baldwin, “Masters at Paris from 1179 to 1215: A Social Perspective” in Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century ed. Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable with Carol D. Lanham (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 138-172. See the chart at the end of the article for a list of men with the title “magister” or a similar title; a fair number are listed as having “illegitimate birth” or “lowly” origins.

\textsuperscript{45}Georges Duby, Qu’est-ce que la société féodale? (Paris: Flammarion, 2002), 1511. Duby gives several examples.

\textsuperscript{46}Delhaye, Enseignement et morale, 20 tells the story of Pierre Mirmet, the abbot of Andernes, who arrived to take on his position only to find the abbey full of men he considered “deformed” – the rejected sons of nobles.
\end{flushright}
The identity of men working within church institutions underwent a marked shift during the period of reforms that spanned the eleventh and early twelfth centuries. Reform measures such as the targeting of simony and the strict enforcement of clerical celibacy aimed to separate the cleric from both kinship groups and secular power structures, while strengthening his ties to other men within the church. Clerical offices were not supposed to derive from family connections, or from gifts of money (often given by family members or lords), and could no longer be bestowed by royalty or aristocratic figures through processes which, essentially, made the cleric the “lord’s man”. Newly enforced limitations of the marriage (and thus the officially sanctioned procreation) of priests meant that church offices and lands could not be passed on through inheritance. Such measures sought to strictly define this class of men and to link their personal power and identity with that of a centralized church. Cushing has suggested that this heightened differentiation could be beneficial for the clergy themselves, as it symbolized not only their difference from other men, but their


superiority, as men unpolluted by the secular world, who oversaw others who were closer to it.49

These limitations put pressure on clerics to define their identity as men in a distinct way; the traditional methods of establishing masculine prowess, exercised through the sword (in war) or the penis (through sex and marriage), were now to be definitively closed to them. Jo Ann McNamara refers to this reorganization of masculinity, or *herrenfrage*, as a crisis point.50 She explains that the newly emerging institutional and social structures of the late eleventh century had a strong misogynist bias, strengthening patriarchal tendencies in society and ensuring that women were excluded from all positions within the church, even nonsacramental roles. McNamara points out that this strengthening of the male monopoly over positions of power is linked to a revival of classical education, which helped “re-establish the theoretical intellectual and moral inferiority of women”51 as well as imbuing men with classical ideals of masculinity as modeled in both the literary and philosophical aspects of the


51 McNamara, “*Herrenfrage*”, 5.
curriculum. Clerics could thus define themselves as free from the pollution associated with women, which made them superior to both women and lay men.

McNamara gestures towards an interesting problem when she asks what effect this restructuring had on the average lay man, and on his relationship with women on an everyday basis, since the discourse on the superiority of men eventually extended to include all men, not just clerics. A further question centres around the effect of this newly separate clerical masculinity on relationships between clerics themselves. Polemics from both the period of Gregorian reform and from the later twelfth century focus heavily on the problem of male sodomy and inappropriate relationships between members of the clergy. Neither the elimination of women from clerical environments, nor the widespread discourse of female inferiority solved the problem of desire, and in fact may have created an environment in which male friendship had to bear more scrutiny because of the possibility of desire between men.

Suggestively, this redefinition of clerical masculinity coincides with the rise of the practice of scholastic disputation, which opened up a parallel avenue for male struggle and domination, using mental rather than physical or sexual capacity. Peter Abelard continually uses metaphors derived from warfare to describe his conflicts and debates
with other scholars. The domination of other men through disputation could take the place of the displays of masculinity in such venues as tournaments. Taylor suggests that the use of such metaphors depicts “an actual transference of social energy” which allowed men to participate in an identifiably masculine pursuit, warfare, within the new social parameters which barred them from doing so in a physical way.

It is possible that a parallel development took place for the sexual markers of masculinity. Clerics could not dominate women sexually, but they could participate in the discourse of male desire through their school readings. This desire could act both as an antidote to the danger of sodomy in the all-male school environment and as a symbol of the superior self-mastery of clerical men. While lay men merely demonstrated their sexual potency, clerics, although still implanted with a desire towards an appropriately female sexual object, controlled their desire, demonstrating a heightened level of mastery over both mind and body. This mastery further symbolized an increased level of dominance over women, whose bodies would become completely negated through this process.


In addition to these developing methods of social definition, the reform of administrative structures within the church provided another outlet for clerical men to demonstrate masculine prowess. There was an increased need for educated clerics to perform administrative duties and carry out newly reformed ecclesiastical policies. Some scholars have hypothesized that this demand in part accounts for the sudden flourishing of education during this period, but there was such a huge influx of students, compared to a relatively small increase in demand for men with this training, that this explanation is unsatisfactory. Dronke points out that within a very short period of time the number of clerics produced by the school system greatly outpaced the number of positions available, so that graduates faced the real prospect of unemployment.54 Furthermore, the increasingly advanced curriculum in schools, which led to the formation of universities, would be of no practical use to men carrying out such duties. While studies became more intensive, with the rise of the “rhetorical turn” and the teaching of advanced logic and dialectic, the demands of administrative positions had not changed. The traditional skills of the trivium, the ability to write elegant letters (which sparked interest in ars dictandi during this period), and perhaps basic mathematical skills were all that these positions required. Training in canon law is

a notable exception, as this was gaining importance for ambitious clerics. But men in the lower orders required very little education beyond basic literacy to carry out their duties. The education provided by cathedral schools must have had a symbolic value along with its practical application, giving the student increased access to upward mobility because he belonged to the elite, educated few.

Increased demand for educated men at secular courts might also have contributed to the increased numbers in schools. Despite a regulative emphasis on the social identity of clerics as distinct from other men, during the twelfth century many clerics continued to work in an administrative capacity at aristocratic courts, as they had in previous eras. The presence of literate clerics, and court schools, increased the prestige of the court itself, making these men desirable companions, as well as skilled workers. In fact, evidence suggests that lesser nobility began to mimic the social practices of royal courts, employing poets and artists to enhance the prestige of their own courts. This option could be attractive to clerics as well, especially those who retained lower orders when they finished their education and thus were not required to be celibate, and might

55 Duby, Société féodale, 1506.
marry.  

But some contemporary accounts make clear that this was by no means an easy or reliable way for an educated man to earn his living. The poems of Hugh Primas, who travelled around Northern France in the mid-twelfth century seeking patronage, paint a picture of dependence and desperate poverty which, even if exaggerated for artistic purposes, makes life as a professional poet seem less than ideal.  

Still, the romantic allure of the “goliardic” life at schools and courts, as depicted in popular songs and stories, could have continued to capture boys’ imaginations. Perhaps, in the case of both ecclesiastical and courtly job prospects, a modestly increased demand for skilled workers caused a vastly overblown number of students to make these positions the target of their hopes, despite a slim chance of success.

Whatever demand there was for educated men within the church and at court, it was quickly outstripped by the number of students emerging from the various schools. Yet the number of men seeking this education remained very high because it seemed to offer increased social prestige and inclusion within the elite. This was an attractive alternative for younger sons, who would otherwise be required to seclude themselves

Clergy in minor orders (generally those who were not members of cathedral communities) could marry. The fact that many students did not wish to take on higher orders is the source of many complaints by twelfth-century teachers, but the nature of such complaints is not that students remained in lower orders so that they could marry, but so that they could earn a higher income by working at court (see the complaints of John of Salisbury and Philip of Harvengt discussed above).

Dronke, “Profane Elements”, 582.
in a monastery, or struggle to contract a marriage. School allowed them to establish themselves amongst like-minded men.

1.4 Personal choice and freedom in the urban school

As mentioned above, the twelfth-century explosion in schooling was centered around urban areas. There is a well-documented population surge which occurred during this period, coextensive with the rise of urban development.\(^{59}\) Paris became one of the largest urban centres in Europe, encompassing a walled area of 275 hectares, twice the size of any other French city housing a major school, and had an estimated population of 25-30,000 circa 1215.\(^{60}\) In Paris alone there were many famous schools, and at least 25 other major schools lay within 100 miles of the city.\(^{61}\)

Urban cathedral schools allowed students much more freedom than students had enjoyed in previous centuries. Although students in previous eras could travel to various schools, most of these schools were monastic and so, once they arrived, their daily routines were dictated by those of the monastic order, and their behaviour was often highly monitored. Urban schools, as I have outlined above, could take many forms, and often took place in informal environments, such as masters’ houses. There

\(^{59}\) See Duby’s discussion of the various factors at work, *Société féodale*, 1499-1501.

\(^{60}\) Baldwin, “Masters at Paris”, 141.

\(^{61}\) Southern, “The Schools of Paris”, 119
was not always space for students to board at the school itself, so they resided in private homes or in the homes of canons. In these environments, students’ behaviour may not have been as closely monitored.

Contemporary criticisms of student behaviour, though they are likely exaggerated for effect, give us a more detailed idea of the freedom students had in the urban setting. Eberhard the German (mid-thirteenth century) complains that students do not take their studies seriously enough, and describes some alternative interests: “non placet his cera, sed nummus; non stylus, immo/Talorum jactus;…/pro studio cauponam, pro doctore tabernae/Provisorem, pro codice scorta colunt…” [The wax tablet does not please them, but money does; [they love] not the stylus, but throwing dice; they love the tavern rather than their studies, the tavern keeper rather than their teachers, whores rather than books...]. 62 Jacques de Vitry, who studied in Paris in the late twelfth century, describes a scholastic culture plagued by petty jealousy, and schools whose space serves a dual purpose: “In una autem et eadem domo scole erant superius, prostibula inferius. In parte superiori magistri legebant; in inferiori meretrices officia turpitudinis exercebant” [Inside one and the same house the schools were upstairs, the prostitutes downstairs. Upstairs, teachers read (out their lessons); downstairs loose

women did their dirty business]. These authors are most likely referring to the behaviour of older students, but their descriptions demonstrate the culture that students, both young and old, and their teachers were thought to embrace.

The freedom these students had, and the “wandering” they did seems parallel to a rite of passage for the knightly class, in which bands of young men would travel across the country together, including knights, the children of serfs, and sometimes young clerics. This travelling gave them a sense of independence and adventure, and also served to bond the next feudal generation to one another. It was an important rite of passage for young knights, and their younger brothers could now perform a similar rite of passage with a slightly different function. Students could make fairly independent decisions about their own education while experiencing the socially diverse urban environment. As an effect of their immersion in the school, students bonded with their classmates and teachers, cementing their shared clerical identity and developing a shared cultural vocabulary as they studied in Latin together. Student travelling had become a recognized, necessary step in a boy’s education according to many twelfth-century

63 John Frederick Hinnebusch, ed. The Historia Occidentalis of Jacques de Vitry: A Critical Edition (Fribourg: Fribourg University Press, 1972), 91. For the description of the petty insults exchanged by students (often based on their nationalities), see pg 92.

64 Duby, Société féodale, 1148-51.
teachers, who referred to it in terms of exile or of an exploration of *terra aliena*. Vincent of Beauvais, writing about the education of nobles in the mid-thirteenth century, writes that a “peregrinatio” away from home is good for young men, because they can focus on their schooling away from the “carniali aflecione parentum et cura rerum familiarum” [worldly love of their parents and the bother of everyday things].

Schooling, travel and independence were interconnected elements of the passage into adulthood for this elite group of men.

This brief summary has shown how twelfth-century demographic trends, including increased population and intensification in urban settings, and cultural shifts as a consequence of reforms to churches and monasteries caused profound changes in the ways in which education was provided to young boys. Overall, the demand for education increased far more than can be accounted for by the supply of available positions in either the church or the courts. Nevertheless, schooling was seen as a path towards social mobility, and men wished to identify themselves with this elite group despite the realities of their prospects for employment. Urban centres offered young men a freedom which the traditional monastic model did not, both in terms of

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65 Delhaye, *Enseignement et morale*, 30 n12, lists a number of authors who use this metaphor, including Hugh of St Victor, Peter Comestor and John of Salisbury.

education and in terms of social development. The next part of this chapter will examine the school environment as a cultural force which shaped and defined the identities of both teachers and students.

1.5 Students and teachers as a social unit

The idea that schools provided a powerful locus for bonding is evidenced in many different texts. Writers such as John of Salisbury and Abelard speak fondly of their school days and admiringly of their teachers, acknowledging the lasting effects of the early days of their education, while others, such as the anonymous author of the *Epistolae ad amicum* and Guibert of Nogent, have less positive memories of their early schooling. The impetus to bond was strong, because the classroom was a fairly intimate environment, in which students of many ages and levels were being taught by the same teacher. They had to adjust to one another’s habits and to their teacher’s methods as individuals and as a group. Students would also compare and critique one another’s compositions in the classroom. Isolated from their parents and homes, young men could find stability by identifying with one another and developing cultural reference points which emerged from the school environment.

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67 Münster-Swendsen examines these negative reminiscences and their significance for our understanding of medieval schooling; “Regimens of Schooling”, 415.

The students who studied canonical Latin authors formed a “textual community” through their shared understanding of these texts and their deployment of classical references.69 Their community centred around texts, but it existed in a shared physical space and was associated with standard teaching practices such as oral repetition, performance, and physical punishment. While Stock’s use of “textual community” is initially on communities surrounding religious texts, many of his statements could apply equally well to the shared reading and interpreting of texts in the auctores curriculum. Stock describes the ways in which a shared understanding of key texts is the basis for social bonds and social organization: “through the text, or, more accurately, through the interpretation of it, individuals who previously had little else in common were united around common goals [...] From textual communities it was a short step to new rituals of everyday life, whether these were imposed by a monastic rule, a lay confraternity, the search for civic equality, or the ethical values arising from literature itself”.70 Discussions of gender and sexuality, as we will see in Chapter 2, were often framed as “ethical”, and communicated information about behavioural and

69 Martin Irvine uses this term in relation to the teaching of grammatica to denote a community formed by two aspects of the social functions of texts, “a received canon of texts and an interpretive methodology articulated in a body of commentary which accompanied the texts and instituted their authority” (Irvine, Textual Culture, 15); cf Brian Stock, The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

moral standards for their young readers. Bond has already noted a parallel between Stock’s “textual communities” and the “Ovidian subculture” which began to form in the late eleventh century and which had its fullest expression in the twelfth century.71 This subculture, arising from the schools of Northern France, is primarily focused on Ovid’s discussion of sexuality and love in his amatory works. Bond’s work demonstrates that the reading of canonical texts in school could function in a variety of ways on a social level, bonding men together through shared readings, but also allowing them to forge their own connections with each other by engaging in textual play based on their shared understandings of those texts.

In these scholastic communities, the teacher plays a very important role as both the provider of the text itself (since the teacher might be the only person in the classroom with access to a book) and as its interpreter.72 Cestaro has described the process of early modern education as a “pederastic insemination”, a means for men to create other men through “grammatical procreation” in the disciplinary and sexually charged


environment of the classroom.\textsuperscript{73} As teachers, these men were living embodiments of the knowledge they imparted, and models of adult behaviour, becoming what Münster-Swendsen calls “the teacher-paragon”.\textsuperscript{74} The teacher was truly the master of the classroom, choosing his own materials and pedagogical style in the absence of any institutional oversight. Teachers were also seen as surrogate parents, providing the love and support their students needed, especially in the monastic context, where students might need special help to adjust to the monastic life. While the idea of teaching by example was most often emphasized in the monastic setting, all teachers were responsible for modelling appropriate behaviour and opinions.

Teachers in the competitive urban environment of twelfth-century schooling had to vie for the loyalty and admiration of their students, because students could always choose to study elsewhere. They no longer had the “captive” audience of oblates at the monastic school, but were working in a dynamic, highly interactive environment. In a city like Paris, in which so many famous teachers were active, personal relationships

\textsuperscript{73} Gary Cestaro, “Pederastic Insemination, or Dante in the Grammar Classroom” in The Poetics of Masculinity in Early Modern Italy and Spain ed. Gerry Milligan and Jane Tylus (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2010), 41-73.

\textsuperscript{74} Münster-Swendsen, “Regimens of Schooling”, 413-14.
were likely as important a factor as intellectual brilliance in attracting and retaining students.\textsuperscript{75}

The best teachers could address the individual abilities of each student. John of Salisbury’s description of Bernard of Chartres’ teaching (\textit{Metalogicon} 1.24) shows that he adapted his methods according to the needs of his students. Bernard was careful not to overload his students with information, but to measure out his lessons according to their abilities: “non in singulis universa doceret, sed pro capacitate audientium, dispensaret eis in tempore doctrinae mensuram” [he did not teach everything all at once, but, according to the abilities of his students, gave them a measured amount of his knowledge over time] (\textit{Met.} 1.24). Bernard also varied his strategies for encouraging his students to learn, urging some students on with admonitions, while others required punishments or flogging. Quintilian (\textit{Inst.} 1.3.6) recommends a similar attention to the specific character of the student, so that the teacher can cajole him into learning with a variety of techniques. Teachers were thus encouraged to develop a sophisticated understanding of the personality and intellectual capability of each student.

A large body of evidence suggests that cultural anxiety often accompanied the recognition of the blend of love and power which bonds teachers and students.

\textsuperscript{75}John of Salisbury was one of many contemporary sources to complain about this trend, see Riché, “Jean de Salibury”, 52-3.
Quintilian (Inst. 2.9.1-2) explains that students must love their teachers, because this will lead them to study zealously to win the teacher’s affection and praise. However, this love must have carefully controlled boundaries, because the student-teacher relationship harbours the potential for inappropriate emotional and sexual relationships, as Juvenal repeatedly recounts in his satires.76 This anxiety is reflected in the rules of monasteries, the earliest sites of medieval schools: a ninth-century gloss on the Benedictine rule explains that measures controlling the sleeping arrangements of children, and the role of their adult supervisors, are specifically geared towards preventing sexual contact amongst children, or between children and adults.77 This comment is significant in that it explicitly articulates a concern that is implicit in many other monastic rules.78 A poem copied in an eleventh-century manuscript demonstrates anxieties around monastic “fatherhood” and its possibilities:

Marcus amans puerum natum mentitur amare
vultque pater dici nescius esse pater;
et pietate nefas et amorem velat amore:
se pietas umbram criminis esse dolet.

76 See my discussion in Chapter 3; Quintilian implies a similar abuse of power, possibly sexual, at Inst. 1.3.17.


“Nate” dies audit, nox et torus audit “amice”.... 79

[Marcus, loving a boy, pretends to love him as a son, and wants to be called “father”, although he doesn’t know how to be one, he covers his shame with piety, and (shameful) love with (pure) love, and piety regrets being the shelter for his crime, the daytime hears “Son”, but night, and his bed, hear “lover”]

It is this tension between homosocial love and sexual desire which is highlighted in the poetry of Baudri of Bourgueil and Marbod of Rennes, among others. There is no doubt that bonds of genuine affection linked many medieval teachers and students, and that many became very close. The tone of their writings is affectionate and personal, commonly including tender expressions of love which could easily be misinterpreted by the modern reader.

C. Stephen Jaeger cautions us not to read such texts anachronistically, but to see them as part of a cultural movement in which such expressions of love were normal, perhaps highly stylized, and served a performative social function. 80 Drawing on popular works dealing with friendship as well as descriptions of medieval male friendships, Jaeger outlines a model wherein platonic friendship between males is equated with the highest

79 Thomas Stehling, ed. Medieval Latin Poems of Male Love and Friendship (New York: Garland, 1984), 23 (and notes pg 148). Stehling explains that this poem was attributed to Claudian at the time of copying (the actual date and authorship is unknown), but the anxiety expressed about “pietas” covering “nefas” between an older man and younger boy conjures up the themes in school texts (such as Juvenal’s second satire and its medieval glosses) and medieval anxieties about monastic and clerical homosocial relationships.

possible virtue because of the total absence of sexual desire. Declarations of love often underline the social roles of the male lovers, so that those in positions of power are said to “love” their social inferiors as a symbol of the protection they offer as lords or kings. On the other hand, there are clearly erotic tendencies in some of the works Jaeger discusses, especially those addressed to young boys by their teachers, which include references to the boys’ physical beauty and allusions to Ganymede alongside more commonplace expressions of love and spiritual longing. In Stehling’s edition of Latin poems about male friendship, there are many references to the proffering, or withholding, of sexual favours by young boys. The use of formats such as classical love elegy suggests that the authors are hinting at, or playing with, notions of power and sexual desire. Perhaps we need not choose between an “ennobling” reading and one which acknowledges sexual desire, or see these expressions as a battle between desire and friendship, but examine how these elements overlap within the same work, and in the same cultural environment. The fact that many such poems refer to the auctores by name, or specifically reference their content, is suggestive since it aligns the student-teacher relationship with the sexualized content of the auctores, as well as

81 Ganymede was often used as shorthand for sexual relationships between older men and youths. See John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 251-3

demonstrating the extent to which the auctores could provide teachers and students with a shared language for discussing love, friendship, and sex.

The classroom was a unique combination of day-to-day familiarity, physical closeness (because of crowded conditions), and love and respect for the teacher; but this feeling of intimacy was accompanied by the constant threat of harsh physical punishment. While most pedagogical texts urge moderation in corporal punishment, all acknowledge that it is a necessity for teaching and learning. Quintilian disapproves of beating, yet admits that it is common practice and endorsed by many other teachers (Inst. 1.3.14). Cestaro notes that the language Quintilian uses to condemn excessive beating conjures up sexual vices, implying that the power teachers wield over their students can be misused in a variety of contexts. References to beating in medieval texts are commonplace, although educators such as Anselm of Bec apparently advocated leniency, stressing the potential negative consequences of excessive punishment. Eadmer’s account of Anselm’s life describes Anselm’s advice to an abbot who complains that daily beatings are not having the desired effect on students in his monastery. Anselm explains that children will be permanently damaged by excessive beatings, becoming like beasts and losing all trust in their teachers:

83 Cestaro, “Pederastic Insemination”, 48. Cestaro notes the use of the terms “crimine turpitudinis” [a disgraceful offense] and “ultimis vitiis” [the worst vices] done by “nefandi homines” [unspeakable men].
Vos autem in tantum terroribus, minis et verberibus undique illos coarctatis, ut nulla penitus sibi liceat libertate potiri. Itaque indiscrete oppressi pravas et spinarum more perplexas infra se cogitationes congerunt, fovent, nutriunt [...].

[You hem them in, in all directions, with so many fears, threats and beatings that they can have no freedom at all. Since they are unfairly oppressed, they harbour, cherish and encourage inside themselves thoughts that are crooked and confused like thorns.]

Anselm also stresses the effect of beatings on the children’s development, and the consequences for them as adult men – if “oppressed” and dominated to excess, they will never be able to develop independence or self-control. The lifelong negative effects of corporal punishment are demonstrated by the twelfth-century story of Benedict, a student who was so brutally beaten and mistreated by his teacher that he never recovered, even as an adult, and died a premature death. Guibert of Nogent (1055-1124) describes a tempestuous relationship consisting of love and violence between himself and his childhood tutor – his teacher has a “saevus amor” [violent love] for his pupil, and Guibert, despite his beaten skin, does not fear him, but obeys him out of “nescio quo medullitus insolito amore” [some kind of unaccustomed, deeply felt love].

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85 Münster-Swendsen, “Regimens of Schooling”, 415. This story should perhaps be considered the medieval version of an urban myth or horror movie; it is contained in a collection of letters between schoolmates and involves fantastical elements, such as torture using a wax doll of the student, etc. Still, it demonstrates the perceived harm of excessive beating and a medieval concern about the power wielded by teachers.
Guibert expresses a mixture of love and revulsion when describing this tutor’s excessive rage and physical punishments.\textsuperscript{86}

Corporal punishment was closely associated with the teaching of grammar, because \textit{grammatica} was not only a mental exercise, but a \textit{disciplina} which involved the training of the body. Boys had to train their voices to recite aloud, with correct pronunciation, and their hands to shape letters, as well as maintaining correct posture and appropriate classroom behaviour. Traditional medieval depictions of Grammar show a woman holding a bundle of sticks or a ruler for beating her charges, and a knife to discipline the tongue and lips of the student.\textsuperscript{87} The trimming of the lips with a knife was a particularly powerful image for medieval Christians, because it conjures up biblical discussions of “uncircumcised lips” and “circumcised hearts” (Exodus 6: 12 and Romans 2:25-9 respectively) which inform Christian ideas about correct speech and belief. As Amsler explains, circumcision “permeates early Christian discourse as a description of the linguistic transformation of the convert”, who must “trim his lips with a pruning-hook”

\textsuperscript{86} Guibert de Nogent, \textit{Histoire de sa vie} (1053-1124) ed. Georges Bourgin (Paris: Picard, 1907), 14-18 (1.5-6). Guibert was tutored in his home, not at a school, but his complex relationship with his tutor mirrors that of many other students who were taught in small group settings away from home.

\textsuperscript{87} For an example and discussion, see Münster-Swendsen, “Scholastic Mastery”, 306-7. Many of these depictions derive from Martianus Capella’s description in \textit{De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii}. 
in order to speak only God’s truth. This linguistic circumcision retains a connection to genital circumcision, and thus to the sexual regulation of the penis, through a nexus of associations between prolixity, frivolity, and the seductive qualities of language, leading Augustine to pray “Circumcide ab omni temeritate omnique mendacio interiora et exteriora labia mea. Sint castae deliciae meae scripturae tuae [...]” [circumcise my interior and my exterior lips of all indiscretion and all lies. Let your scriptures be my chaste delights]. The linguistic orthodoxy carved out on the bodies of boys by Lady Grammar, occurring in parallel with an “ethical” education which includes discussions of sexual orthodoxy, reflects the history of this Christian grammatical-sexual metaphor.

The *regula* or rod with which teachers would beat students, closely linked with the figure of the teacher since Roman times, became the ultimate symbol of the grammar master. The *regula* measures the student’s worth, and punishes him when he is lacking. This disciplining and mastery over the body, embedded in the representation of grammar itself, resonates with the discipline young men were expected to develop over their sexual desires.

88 See Mark Amsler, *Etymology and Grammatical Discourse in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Amsterdam: Johns Benjamins, 1989), 84 (and 84n3). The reference to the pruning-hook is from Origen.

89 See Vance’s discussion of this passage, in which he remarks that Augustine is “on the one hand comparing his tongue to his phallus, and on the other, comparing the hermeneutical performance to erotic love.” Eugene Vance, *Marvelous Signals: Poetics and Sign Theory in the Middle Ages* (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 7 (and 7-11 for the discussion of the entire passage).
The teacher’s performance of judgement and punishment takes place before an audience of many students. Students would even participate in one another’s punishment, as in the well-documented practice sometimes known as “mounting the horse”, which involved the stripping and restraining of a student by his peers while the teacher spanked him. The fact that many students later became grammar masters themselves meant that these enactments of educational domination and subjection were perpetuated across generations. This could also take the form of intellectual rivalry between young, newly-minted grammar masters and their teachers, like the bitter rivalry between Peter Abelard and his master, William of Champeaux. Gary Cestaro has described this self-perpetuating educational cycle as “pederastic insemination”: the non-reproductive creation of men by other men, through a model of medieval education entwined with classical traditions of educational pederasty. Aside from the enculturation of students through “insemination” with ideas in the classroom, this notion also involves a cycle of domination and subjection whereby students become teachers in their turn, just as the eromenos become erastes. The historical association of pederasty with schooling persists in the form of medieval and early modern anxieties about the suspect closeness between students and teachers in the homosocial school

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90 Cestaro, “Pederastic Insemination”, 43, 48-9. The boy who was being flogged would be “mounted” on the back of another student.

91 Cestaro, “Pederastic Insemination”, 44.
environment. Quintilian advances a notion of “pederastic insemination” when he remarks that just as a baby is born by the joining of his parents, and seed will not sprout in ground that has not been ploughed, so eloquence can only be born through a close relationship between student and teacher (Inst. 2.9.3). The first image evokes reproductive sex between a man and a woman, and the metaphor of seed and plough is often applied to sex and fertility, but also to sex between men; and Quintilian links these directly to the student-teacher relationship as productive of eloquence.92

Thus, the teacher’s power over his students was a blend of social factors, derived not only from his prestige as an expert in grammar and classical literature, or his role as an enforcer of discipline, but also through bonds of affection. Students would memorize his words and gestures, while his dominance was physically inscribed on their bodies, and admiration of his mastery transfixed them. All of these factors are significant when we consider the formative environment in which students would absorb concepts of sexuality drawn from readings of the auctores.

1.6 Schooling as “puberty rite”

Walter Ong has suggested that the medieval (and early modern) system of education can be seen as a kind of “puberty rite”. He explains that the process of education as it occurred during this time period shares various features of the traditional puberty rites of many cultures: a focus on prepubescent and pubescent boys, segregation by gender, physical isolation from kinship groups (and more broadly, from the rest of society), the presence of ritualized violence and the transmission of secret knowledge or markers of elite status. All of these things are heavily marked in the environment of medieval schools: away from their families, in an all-male environment, students acquired Latin literacy, a sought-after skill associated with the elite. Latin literacy was particularly elite because of Latin’s curious status as a language which was no longer native to any one group, but was associated only with literacy and the church. Ong underlines the fact that medieval and early modern schools incorporate beatings ritually, not just to maintain order in the classroom, but to hone the students’ bravery and mark out the seriousness of schooling as a rite of passage. Another aspect of traditional puberty rites is sexual initiation, which marks the transition from childhood to adulthood. This could easily be combined with Ong’s suggestion about the basic elements of schooling.

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94 Ong, “Puberty Rite”, 111
as puberty rite. I would argue that for medieval schools, initiation into sexual knowledge is folded into the knowledge of Latin classics – these two kinds of “secret” knowledge are acquired simultaneously.

The school as a locus for initiation into sexual activity itself (not just “book knowledge” of it) was later adopted by students at medieval universities. Karras has illuminated the role of sexual performance in the shared rituals of fifteenth century German university students. New students were dressed as goats and ritually deprived of their horns; because goats were associated with lust, this may have symbolized the triumph of rationality over physical urges. At the same time, university students were well known for their sexual activity, including group sexual practices such as the gang rape of prostitutes. The combination of male bonding and sex helped to define these students as wholly separate from women, and to ensure that their only contact with women was related to sexual acts. Sex was far from absent in these environments, and by incorporating sexual material into the reading curriculum, schools could help shape students’ relationship to sexuality.

The differing perspectives of Karras and Ong shed light on facets of education as a puberty rite. Ong’s account relies more heavily on structuralist anthropology, which

posits a narrative of isolation, transformation, and reintegration to explain the social function of puberty rites, so that the individual is bonded to the entire tribe through the ritual process. On the other hand, Karras describes hazing rituals which take place in the public sphere, not in secret, and are intended to mark an individual as a member of a specific group within broader society, and to bond members of this elite group to one another. Ong’s model may be more appropriate for describing education prior to the twelfth century, when the monastic model of education meant that students were isolated in a highly regulated environment during puberty, only to be released afterwards into broader social environments such as the court (or to complete the transition to full participation in the monastic way of life). As we have seen, students during the twelfth century were less likely to be educated in a monastery, and had more flexibility in terms of where this “puberty rite” took place. Indeed, it is possible that, from the twelfth century onward, conflicts between “town and gown” were caused by the fact that students were not sufficiently isolated from other social groups, and their rites of passage were disruptive to society at large. Both models offer important insights into the correlation between puberty as a “liminal” state and education as a force for directing the liminal subject into appropriate social roles through gendered bonding.

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96 See my discussion of Van Gennep’s “rites de passage” and liminality in Chapter 3.
1.7 Reading and feeling

The school could be a place for powerful emotions, be it students’ love and fear of their teachers, participation in ritualized male bonding, or the fostering of rivalry or friendship amongst colleagues. The content of the curriculum also had a strong emotional element, since the stories in the auctores often dealt with themes of friendship, love, and desire. Some stories, such as Statius’ Achilleid or Terence’s Eunuchus (and most of his other plays), revolve around the love and sex lives of adolescent boys, allowing student readers to align themselves with the main characters and to imagine themselves as participants in the sexual activities described. Ovid’s Ars Amatoria provides a set of “rules” for seduction, again suggesting that the reader can choose to act in accordance with these rules, and thus insert himself into the scenarios described in the text.

Pamphilus, the twelfth-century equivalent of a bestseller, which gave rise to the modern term “pamphlet” due to the format in which it circulated, combines Terentian and Ovidian themes as an adolescent boy attempts to seduce an adolescent girl using rhetorical argumentation, and concludes with a rape scene. Woods has suggested that stories such as Pamphilus allow boys to imagine or mentally try out multiple subject positions, including that of the rapist and rape victim. The fact that Pamphilus, and some versions of Terence’s plays, were presented in the form of a dialogue suggests that

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they could have been read aloud by the students, allowing them to perform these fantasies in a supervised setting.

Medieval authors describe the emotional effect of reading such texts in vivid terms. Augustine’s famous remark that he once preferred to cry for Dido rather than for the state of his soul demonstrates the tension inherent in the use of the *auctores* for grammar education. To early medieval readers in particular, the content of the *auctores* seemed to undermine the Christian education schools were supposed to provide; even in later periods, there was always the chance that an adolescent reader might be more affected by the raw emotions evoked by the story than by any grammatical lesson. The writing style of classical authors was itself thought to be seductive, and medieval authors are careful to stress that while eloquence is valued, it is supposed to be directed towards a moral purpose, not enjoyed for its own sake. Jerome contrasted being a “Ciceronian” with being a Christian in order to express this tension between classical education and Christian values. The ability of “pagan” authors to provoke emotion through their stories, and to provoke delight through their use of words, was viewed with suspicion in the early medieval classroom.

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98 Medieval commentators often read Dido as a personification of the notion of desire, which adds a complexity to the strong emotions she seems to elicit; see Desmond’s discussion in Marilynn Desmond, *Reading Dido: Gender, Textuality and the Medieval Aeneid* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 74-98.

99 Jerome, Epistle 22 (*Ad Eustochium*)
Augustine was not alone in being deeply affected by his childhood reading; later accounts report a similar connection between schooling, lust and emotion. Guibert of Nogent’s account of his own life contains many fascinating details about schooling and relationships between students and teachers at the turn of the twelfth century. Guibert recalls his fascination with Virgil’s *Bucolics* and with the work of Ovid, which inspired him to write his own “lepores amatorios” using “obscenula verba” as a young man.\(^{100}\)

The life of Gervinus, an eleventh-century abbot who began his studies at the cathedral school of Rheims, gives a more detailed description of the effect of sexually explicit materials on an impressionable student:

...Sed cum adolescens grammaticae operem daret, et patulo sensu ipsorum jam carminum vim perponderet, animadvertit inter ea quaedam quorum omnis intentio haec est, ut aut expletas luxurias referant, aut quodmodo quis explere voluerit, vel explere potuerit, recenseant...diaboli instinctu ad hoc coepit impelli, ut ea faceret quae tantorum poetarum aestimabat narratione celebrari. Ad hoc igitur hortatu sodalium perductus est, ut infaustos expeteret complexus...ventum itaque illa usque est, quo castitatis iura frangeretur.....haec ergo causa ei fuit, qua secularia studia deservit.\(^{101}\)

[But when as an adolescent he began to work at grammar, and focused his attention on the broader meaning of the poems, he realized that among them there were some poems whose entire intention was this, either to recount fulfilled desires (*luxurias*) or to explain how someone longed to fulfil his desires, or the method by which he could do so ...he began to be driven by a diabolic inspiration towards doing those things which

\(^{100}\) Guibert de Nogent, *Histoire de sa vie*, 64 (1.17).

he thought were celebrated in the texts of so many poets. And he was spurred on in this by the urgings of his companions, that he might achieve these cursed sexual acts (*complexus)*... And so he might have gone so far that the laws of chastity were broken... This is the reason why he left off his secular studies].

Such examples demonstrate that students’ understanding of the content of these texts went far beyond the grammatical, and that the texts played on their emotions and budding sexual curiosity. As I explained in the Introduction, the practice of *ennaratio* meant that the content of these texts was not allegorized or abstracted, but presented in quite a straightforward fashion. Since *enarratio* aims to provide students with a literal understanding of the text, it is perhaps not surprising that students like Gervinus found that their new-found understanding of the *auctores* was paired with new emotions elicited by the content of these texts.

There is some evidence to suggest that the reading of the *auctores*, and the emotions that accompany it, is itself associated with adolescence or childishness. Peter of Blois accuses Raoul of Beauvais of being an “elementarius senex” (childish old man) because of his long career of teaching the *auctores*, suggesting that his personal and religious development has been arrested at an adolescent stage.\(^\text{102}\) This reflects a similar remark by Jerome that priests who continue to read “comedies” and love poems into adulthood are opening themselves up to sin: while such readings are necessary in childhood, they

\(^{102}\) Delhaye, *Education et morale*, 55.
should eventually be set aside in favour of holy works. Guibert of Nogent associates his reading of Ovid (and his composition of his own *obscenula verba*) with the “rabies” [madness] of adolescent lust, which he eventually learns to tame with the help of his teacher Anselm, who teaches him techniques for the rational control of the body. Despite their negative effects, these texts seem to be closely associated with adolescent development. While necessary for proper fluency in Latin, these readings are associated with uncontrolled adolescent emotions, especially lust, which must be left behind as the student matures. The role of the teacher is pivotal in controlling the emotional and social effects of their content, but he himself must be careful not to take undue pleasure in reading them.

### 1.8 Sexuality and schooling

This chapter has examined the history of medieval schools as formative of social identities for students and teachers. As “teacher-paragons”, medieval *magistri* acted as models of male behaviour for their students, just as they modeled correct grammar and elocution. The homosocial bonding which took place in schools helped students develop a sense of belonging, allowing them to define themselves as men and clerics during an era when these notions were undergoing profound changes. At the same

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104 (see note 100 above)
time, many aspects of classroom life were haunted by the possibility of sex, whether through the psychosexual implications of “mounting the horse”, the intensity of affections between students and teachers, or the evocation of lust in readings from the *auctores*. The discussions of sexuality that took place in the classroom are situated in this nexus of socially coercive forces - just as students would leave school with a collection of key quotations from classical authors inscribed in their memories, they would also take with them cultural *mores* relating to sex and gender folded into these texts and their medieval commentaries. The remainder of this dissertation will examine in detail the complex relationship between sexuality and schooling, and its implications for adolescent students.
Chapter 2
Schooling desire: ethics, grammar and the “rules for love”

...utilitas est ut hoc libro perlecto unusquisque sciit sibi pulcras invenire puellas, vel utilitas est cognitio eorum que continentur in hoc libro. Ethice subponitur quia de moribus loquitur.

...its usefulness is that, by reading through this book, anyone might learn to find beautiful girls for himself, or the usefulness is the knowledge of the [other?] things contained in this book. It belongs to the category of ethics because it talks about behaviour.

--Accessus ad auctores, introduction to Pamphilus

This twelfth-century introduction to Pamphilus takes a text whose theme is love and sexual desire devolving into rape, and frames it as an “ethical” text for use in the classroom. It is difficult for the modern reader to discern the process by which texts like Pamphilus, Ovid’s amatory works, and Terence’s comedies could be routinely described as “ethical” in medieval descriptions of the reading curriculum. But such designations are an important signal that the work being done by these texts was multivalent; along with grammatical mastery, the student was absorbing the content of the text, and this content had an educational function as well. In the previous chapter I outlined the ways in which medieval education fostered the development of socially functional men through a combination of coercive practices of mental, emotional, and physical formation. Parallel to these practices is the content of the curriculum itself, which presents further models of masculinity and sexuality. These models were absorbed

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through the practices of “ethical reading” and could be redeployed by students in a variety of contexts. Beyond the broad categorization of sexually explicit texts as ethical, there is also a strain of discourse in twelfth-century schools which frames sexuality itself as akin to grammar: a human system of agreed-upon rules, perpetuated through formal education. Ovid’s *Ars amatoria* and *Remedia amoris* construct a learned performance of masculinity based on “rules for love” and “cures” for sexual desire, paired with the grammatical imperatives common to all the *auctores* curriculum. The idea that desire can, and must, be controlled by rules of behaviour is one that was very familiar to medieval monks and clerics, yet modern scholars have consistently expressed surprise that texts like the *Ars* could be taught in medieval classrooms. My analysis will show that framing these texts as rule-books (and Ovid as a teacher quite similar to any *grammaticus*) allows medieval commentators to treat sexual behaviour as a topic to be mastered alongside the *trivium*. Alan of Lille’s grammatical-sexual metaphor in *De planctu Naturae* elaborates on the twelfth-century conception of the links between ethics, sex, grammar, and teaching. Although Alan seems at first to be advocating for a rule-governed grammatical/sexual orthodoxy, he ends up demonstrating that both grammatical and sexual orthodoxy depend on the transmission of norms through teaching, a process which is in itself quite unreliable, and that mis-learned concepts of sex and grammar can result in new ways of thinking and acting which lie beyond the reach of the rules.
The texts in this curriculum were explicitly framed as teaching behaviour and social concepts alongside grammar, which is evidenced by the labeling of such texts as “ethical”. In a singular move, medieval educators unveiled one layer of a “hidden curriculum” by acknowledging their own role in the process of enculturation. On the other hand, such a wide variety of texts, from the standard works of Virgil, to Ovid’s amatory works, to the Satires of Horace and Juvenal, are referred to as “ethical” in accessus that this designation threatens to lose any significance. Before exploring the inclusion of sexuality under ethics, we must briefly discuss the broader function of an “ethical” medieval curriculum.

2.1 Reading and the ethical poetic

Judson Boyce Allen has extensively demonstrated the ways in which medieval readers and writers defined poetry less as a specific genre of literature than as a body of literature with an inherently “ethical” character. Allen explores the ways in which later

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2 In the accessus collection edited by Huygens, which gathers many of the most widespread accessus of the twelfth century, every text listed is classified as “ethicus” with the exception of the Physiologus, an anonymous text which describes various animals.

3 Judson Boyce Allen, The Ethical Poetic of the Later Middle Ages: a Decorum of Convenient Distinction (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982). While ethics was a formal, philosophical category in the more advanced levels of education (especially after the translation of Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics and its propagation in the medieval universities of the thirteenth century), its definition within the bounds of the study of grammatica was fairly vague. I will be following Allen’s lead in that I will base my interpretation of “ethics” on the evidence from pedagogical sources. See also Philippe Delhaye, Enseignement et morale au 12e siècle (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires Fribourg Suisse, 1988), 83-134 for a discussion of “grammatica” and “ethica”.
medieval theories about poetry posit that the reader, text and commentary are connected through a network of shared values implicit in the act of reading, so that “the audience becomes a part of the poem, because the potential moral behaviour of the audience, in parallel and *assimilatio* with the words of the poem, enjoyed in relation to the textual story a real similitude – a similitude real in shape, power and in importance.”\(^4\) To read this ethical poetry (which is really *all* poetry), the reader must connect the text to his own behaviour and decision-making: the text “actualizes” the reader’s internal drama.\(^5\) Interestingly, Allen also suggests that the interchangeable nature of ethics and poetry works the other way as well, so that in order to act ethically, people must imagine themselves as characters in a story.\(^6\) Thus, the ethical poetic entails a powerful mode of storytelling, which draws the reader in, leading him beyond the moment of reading by creating an iterative framework within which ethical narratives are adapted, reenacted and retold in a variety of social settings. The process of *assimilatio*, which describes a wide variety of ways of thinking about resemblance, allows for multiple relationships between fictional narratives, their readers’ lived experience, and the shared world of figurative and literal language inhabited by readers

\(^4\) Ibid., 296.

\(^5\) Ibid., 217.

\(^6\) Ibid., 32.
and writers alike.\textsuperscript{7} These various realities are united through the ethical poetic. Ethical reading defines a special relationship between reader and text, texts which, in John Dagenais’ words, consist of “acts of demonstrative rhetoric” which lay out for the reader “a world of human action for good or ill co-extensive with their own”.\textsuperscript{8}

Allen’s nuanced approach to the intertwined nature of ethics and poetry draws on a vast array of commentary traditions from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries. While he acknowledges in passing the educational context from which these commentaries emerge, his overall approach is theoretical rather than practical: he is interested in the theory of “ethics-hyphen-poetry”\textsuperscript{9} outlined by these sources. Other scholars have shown the ways in which concepts of “ethical poetic”, both in the reading and writing of poetry, apply to later medieval vernacular or secular literature.\textsuperscript{10} I would argue that the notion of ethical reading Allen has outlined has its origins in the medieval educational system itself, because learning to read took place within a specialized social

\textsuperscript{7} See Allen, \textit{Ethical Poetic}, 179-247. Allen develops a complex explanation of \textit{assimilatio} based on the four levels of exegetical reading (literal, allegorical, tropological and anagogical), which make up “a normative array of possible realities, a set of four which is [...] well-adapted to affirm the kinds of values poems tend to insist on: the world of empirical experience, the world of the self, the world of discursive or definitional generalization, and the eschatalogical world figurally achieved” (215).

\textsuperscript{8} John Dagenais, \textit{The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture: Glossing the “Libro de buen amor”} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), xvii.

\textsuperscript{9} Allen, \textit{Ethical Poetic}, 12

\textsuperscript{10} See Dagenais, \textit{Ethics of Reading} (cited above), Jessica Rosenfeld, \textit{Ethics and Enjoyment in Late Medieval Poetry: Ethics After Aristotle} (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2013) for major studies.
environment. If reading poetry came to mean ethical reading, surely that mode of reading had to be taught from the earliest stages of literacy, since the majority of the auctores read at the elementary level of schooling consisted of works of poetry. While ethical reading as described by Allen, and as elaborated upon by Jessica Rosenfeld, is heavily influenced by later medieval developments in Aristotelian philosophy (including the new availability of texts that had previously disappeared from the medieval Western canon), many key concepts were already present in eleventh- and twelfth-century pedagogies.¹¹ For example, the late medieval focus on poetic language as a language of “praise and blame” echoes earlier medieval (and late antique) descriptions of the function of satire. Many twelfth-century accessus to Ovid’s amatory works contain the same ethical imperatives as the later ones cited by Allen, suggesting a longer history of ethical reading which lacks substantial scholarly examination.¹² Mary Carruthers has noted, in relation to Allen’s work, that “the importance of pedagogical practices, especially at the elementary level, has not been sufficiently stressed.” ¹³ The

¹¹ Rosenfeld, Ethics and Enjoyment, links Aristotelian concepts of ethics with late medieval traditions of love poetry.

¹² Allen, Ethical Poetic, 52-4 (and notes) provides many examples from the thirteenth to fifteenth century; for the twelfth century, see my work below.

sophisticated notion of ethical reading in the later Middle Ages must have had its origins in the educational practices of the previous centuries.

2.2 Reading sex ethically, and literally

It is easy to apply the concept of ethical reading to medieval educational texts with themes which dovetail neatly with the stated goals of Christian education, such as exemplary lives of saints and martyrs, or biblical epics. But what does it mean to read sexually explicit texts ethically in this context? And how is ethical reading tied to basic literacy? The interpretations provided by medieval commentators are not simply focused on negative exempla (an approach usually referred to in medieval sources as *ad cautelam*, warnings about what not to do) but provide ample information about different motivations for sexual actions and their consequences. Ethical reading of such texts suggests that the reader must implicate himself in a range of sexual scenarios. This notion has troubled modern scholars of the history of education to the extent that many remark that the content of the texts was somehow brushed aside in favour of a purely grammatical approach, or insist that *ad cautelam* readings could effectively control the unruly sexuality portrayed in many of the curricular texts. These approaches deny both the nuances contained in medieval commentators’ interpretations of these texts, and the variable effects they could have on the individual experience of thousands of schoolboys. It is a serious mistake to see medieval educational texts in terms of “the negative relation”, “the cycle of prohibition”, and “the logic of censorship”, all of which
construct stable relationships between power structures and sexuality in terms of prohibition or occlusion, rather than in their productive capacity.\textsuperscript{14} Simply by introducing the topic of sex into the classroom, medieval teachers are doing much more than saying “no” to sex; sex becomes an object of mastery, closely connected with grammar, and a body of knowledge whose limits are heavily influenced by the cultural protocols of the school.

When we look at the notion of ethical reading within the framework of elementary practices of literacy, we encounter a more practical version of the world of hermeneutics Allen describes. If learning to read poetry means learning to read ethically, students must relate the subject matter of the readings to their own thoughts and decisions. Their teachers must demonstrate the appropriate way to do so, simultaneously transmitting the basic grammatical and lexical interpretation of the text and its ethical implications. This idea, which is crucial to the work I have undertaken in this dissertation, is not widely accepted by scholars of medieval schooling and literacy. The “ethical poetic” is a more prevalent concept for scholars in literary studies, while “literal reading” is the key concept for many studies of elementary education. This allows scholars of the history of education to retain the comfortable illusion that sexually explicit texts could remain

“value-free” due to their function in the classroom as grammatical exercises.\(^{15}\)

However, as Hexter himself admits, a literal reading, with its close explanation of the text itself, will often undermine, and certainly outweigh in terms of quantity, any overarching moral, or \textit{intentio}, included in the \textit{accessus}.\(^{16}\) Literal reading does not solve what to the contemporary mind is the “problem” of sex in the classroom.

Literal reading, the basic understanding of the \textit{littera} of the text, was fundamental to the early stages of medieval schooling. Students would learn to read letter by letter, word by word, interpreting the grammatical complexities of the text with their teachers’ assistance.\(^{17}\) The text was presented directly, its content explained in straightforward terms, with no allegorical readings or typological explanations: the goal was basic comprehension of the author’s \textit{intentio} [purpose for the work, or intended meaning].\(^{18}\) The practice of guided literal reading and explanation of classical authors was called \textit{enarratio}, and constituted a middle ground between grammar and rhetoric, because it


\(^{16}\) Ibid., 213-14.

\(^{17}\) See my Introduction for a discussion of the texts and methods which informed the early stages of education.


could encompass discussions of style as well as basic syntax. This literal reading was the basis for other methods of interpretation, which would be introduced as students advanced in their study of Christian scripture. As I have noted, Augustine famously characterized the use of pagan authors in the service of Christian study as “the despoiling of the Egyptians” (De doctrina Christiana, 2.40.60) implying that the content of these texts was essentially neutralized by the higher purpose of study, and this is echoed by many medieval teachers. As one accessus to Horace’s satires explains, “quedam enim sciantur ut sciantur sicut evangelia, quedam propter aliud, ut auctores” [for some things are learned so that they may be understood, like the Gospels, some things for the sake of something else, like the auctores]. Although in a broad sense this may seem plausible, it is difficult to imagine how a sustained reading of Ovid’s Ars amatoria, for example, could maintain such an approach. Most accessus to the Ars, which posit the overall “learning outcomes” for the work, state that the student will learn to find and keep a lover, as examples below will show. After all, this is the author’s stated intentio, so a true understanding of the text as provided by a literal reading must


21 Reynolds, Medieval Reading, 12 (my translation). Reynolds maintains that Horace’s text is effectively “tamed” by such interpretive strategies.
produce this result. A literal reading of Ovid seems to place the ethical reader in a difficult position.

As any scholar of the postmodern era can clearly see, there are some major problems with the narrative of “literal reading” as it is presented in a surprising variety of modern scholarship on medieval education. Words can themselves have many meanings, especially when they travel between classical and biblical contexts, so that the “literal” is no guarantee of the stable, canonical reading that is sometimes alluded to in discussions of medieval pedagogy. This is amply demonstrated by standard medieval glossing procedure, in which vastly different definitions or explanations are often suggested for the same word, separated simply by vel [or], with no preference on the part of the commentator implied (see my discussion in the Introduction). Such glossing practices undermine the widespread idea that the teacher’s reading of the text tightly controlled students’ interpretations; some possibilities might seem more plausible to certain students and less so to others. Furthermore, the idea that any text can be read for grammatical content alone defies comprehension: the meaning must be absorbed along with the formal grammatical structures which are supposedly the only focus of these readings. Reynolds reminds us that the glossator is an expert mediator who performs for a specific audience, and in her opinion, this removes the notion of
“reader response” from the elementary, literal forms of reading.\textsuperscript{22} The teacher, who “controls and polices access” to the very text itself, also heavily influences the student’s interpretation of the text through his exposition.\textsuperscript{23} In the course of her extensive work on Horace, Reynolds demonstrates that glossators have many strategies for “taming” the text, depending on the level of literacy of the student and the educational purpose of the reading. Copeland, on the other hand, reminds us that “initial comprehension through the literal sense is as much a terminus for some as a point of entry for others” in a pedagogy of reading that aims to uncover multiple layers of meaning depending on the reader’s age and form of literacy.\textsuperscript{24} Whatever the literal sense itself is, it forms the basis for all other hermeneutical possibilities. Although the \textit{auctores} are usually seen as part of students’ preparation for a more multi-layered reading of biblical texts, Woods has shown that the same text could be revisited for different purposes, at different levels of education not limited to literal reading.\textsuperscript{25}

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\textsuperscript{22} Reynolds, \textit{Medieval Reading}, 31.


\textsuperscript{25} Marjorie Curry Woods, “A Medieval Rhetoric Goes to School – and to the University: the Commentaries on the \textit{Poetria nova}” Rhetorica 9:1 (1991); and \textit{Classroom Commentaries: Teaching the “Poetria nova” Across Medieval and Renaissance Europe} (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2010). Woods shows that Geoffrey of Vinsauf’s \textit{Poetria nova} was read as a poem, along with the \textit{auctores} in the lower levels of
Reynolds’ picture of entirely mediated reading would seem to preclude the possibility of crying for Dido, like Augustine, or becoming so enraptured with Ovidian love poetry that you compose your own verses, like Gervinus. The fact that these men were able to react to the texts in personal ways suggests a less than iron control on the part of the teacher. Texts like Pamphilus or Alda, most likely written by or for students, discuss themes of sexuality in a straightforward way, like their inspirations in the auctores curriculum (the works of Terence and Ovid), suggesting that the original readings of these texts were not as tamed by their grammatical context as Reynolds has suggested. But the classification of sexually explicit texts in the auctores curriculum as ethical also requires us to broaden our notion of ethical reading beyond the mere inculcation of stable norms, so as not to lose “the subversive or excessive, the rebellious or the strange”, notions which lie at the heart of many curricular texts. Topics such as sexual violence, homosexual desire, and gender fluidity are vividly depicted in more than one standard school text, with a variety of interpretations in commentary traditions. To schooling, while more advanced commentaries address the more technical aspects of the work dealing with rhetorical theory.

26 See my discussion in Chapter 1.

27 Jessica Rosenfeld. Ethics and Enjoyment, 4.
understand how these texts were read ethically we must perhaps adapt Allen’s model to include a more variable, less controlled, queerer approach to their content.

Mary Carruthers describes an alternative approach to the connection between ethics and reading in her discussion of medieval conceptions of memory. Her focus is on the way physical and mental processes help to tie reading to the memorization, or perhaps more accurately, internalization, of the text. She describes the evolution of the metaphor likening reading to digestion, commonly found in medieval sources, as an important conceptual framework for understanding the medieval activity of reading.28 As she astutely reminds us, reading and memorization were in many ways synonymous, so that reading a text meant truly absorbing it, keeping the words and meaning of the text permanently engraved on the mind of the reader. The initial absorption of the text, or lectio, sets the subvocal reading aloud of the text (murmur) as parallel to chewing.29 It must be followed by digestion, or meditatio, a process by which the reader incorporates the text into his personal world of meaning. This notion of meditatio bears a resemblance to Allen’s description of assimilatio, but focuses on the reader’s personal absorption and redeployment of the ideas in the text, rather than a continued

28 Carruthers, “Memory and the ethics of reading”, Chapter 5 in Book of Memory

29 Carruthers, Book of Memory, 164. For more on the subject of the difference between murmured lectio and silent reading, see Paul Saenger, The Space Between Words: the Origins of Silent Reading (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).
resemblance or mirroring of reader, text and authorial intentio. The end result of meditatio is that the reader can deploy the words and meanings of the text in ways meaningful to her personally, in order to use the text as a mediator for the thoughts and feelings of others, creating common ground through a shared understanding of canonical texts. Such a deployment of the cultural memories contained in literary texts helps to make the present moment readable, and thus, more familiar, through the text. While Allen explains that ethical readers might imagine themselves as characters in a story in order to make ethical choices, Carruthers suggests that the story itself can become folded into the present. Carruthers’ key intervention is to frame this canonical literature as a “copious” record of cultural memory, interpreted by each student and reader, not as a collection of static rules to be applied universally.

2.3 Accessus and the medieval hidden curriculum

The idea that a school curriculum is a repository of cultural memories, or social norms, is prominent in many analyses of modern educational systems. Contemporary sociologists of education often use the term “hidden curriculum” to describe the

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30 Carruthers, Book of Memory, 179-183. Carruthers gives an example from Abelard’s Historia calamitatum in which Heloise quotes Lucan in order to draw her audience into a familiar space, to make her situation more comprehensible. I consider this a slightly problematic example since it is Abelard’s account of Heloise’s actions, which suggests to me that the quotation is part of his strategy for making Heloise sympathetic...but the social function of the quotation is the same in either case.

31 Ibid., 182.
“systematic side effects of schooling that we sense but which cannot be adequately accounted for by reference to the explicit curriculum”. In other words, the hidden curriculum is a set of socio-cultural concepts contained within a curriculum which claims to be teaching something else. This idea is obviously very close to Bourdieu’s concept of the inculcation of habitus through the daily practice of pedagogy, both formal and informal, but the hidden curriculum refers more explicitly to the stated and unstated goals of educational institutions as distinct from other social structures.

Examples of hidden curricula embedded in modern schooling include the inculcation of gendered behaviours, heteronormativity, and racialization, through the depiction of socially dominant groups as “normal” or as the only groups represented in curricular materials.

In general, the notion of hidden curriculum is ill-suited to discussions of premodern schooling, especially since a substantial body of scholarship on the sociological theory of education, influenced by Marx and Durkheim, is focused on the broader interplay between capitalism, the state and the individual citizen. The issues to be investigated in a pre-, or proto-, capitalist society where there is no centralized control over a “system”


33 See my discussion in Chapter 1. Habitus can include many forms of learning and socialization both in school and outside of it.
of schools are very different. Furthermore, the “hidden” nature of this curriculum of culturally appropriate thought and behaviour is primarily a modern phenomenon. Modern education usually claims to be focused on the acquisition of skills (for example, reading and arithmetic), while medieval and early modern education was quite openly focused on the formation of personal habits and morality as well as academic skills. Medieval and early modern teachers often write about the social effects of teaching, and education in ethics was a major component of the personal development teachers sought to foster.

Jaeger has written extensively about the ways in which medieval educators strove to teach morally and socially correct behaviour to would-be courtiers and clerics. He analyses formal descriptions of correct posture, speech, and manners found in medieval pedagogical outlines and descriptions of teaching. Jaeger’s focus is on the idea of litterae and more as two linked, identifiable disciplines which were taught through specific educational practices. He examines pedagogical documents in order to uncover traces of the “charismatic teaching” carried out by medieval teachers, an expression of their

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34 Vallance, “Hiding the hidden curriculum” argues for the convergeance of a number of social developments in the late nineteenth century which caused moral and cultural imperatives to become increasingly “hidden”.


36 Jaeger attempts to identify schools which make specific claims to teach more. See Jaeger, “The new education institutionalized: schools of manners”, Chapter 3 in Envy of Angels.
role as the living embodiment of both scholastic mastery and correct behaviour. Jaeger’s approach has some major drawbacks in terms of uncovering the broader cultural implications of education, because it revolves around looking for specific words, like *mores* and related terms, and generally takes educational goals stated by medieval authors in pedagogical manuals at face value. Similarly, in his work on love and friendship between men, which is highly informed by his notions on the teaching of *mores*, Jaeger states that he endeavours to let the texts speak for themselves, without “forcing modern conceptions onto them.”

Aside from the obvious objections to such a statement (how can a text speak “for itself”? etc.), this approach causes Jaeger to ignore or negate queer possibilities in most of the texts he examines. Under the guise of discarding “homosexuality” and “heterosexuality” as terms irrelevant to the medieval era (a practice which is now quite standard for historians of sexuality and gender), Jaeger goes even further, breaking off love from sexual desire, and from physical sexual acts, in ways which greatly simplify the nuanced play evident in many medieval texts and social conventions.

Jaeger claims to be “expanding the range of partners in love


relationships and objects of desire”, but instead, in a move which mimics late medieval allegorical commentaries of classical texts, he routinely reframes the erotic overtones in medieval texts as (sexually neutralized) lessons about moral virtue.\textsuperscript{39} The ethical readers and writers Jaeger presents are relentlessly literal, heterosexual and almost boringly virtuous.

If neither “the hidden curriculum” nor a formalized program of \textit{litterae et mores} can account for the complex ethical dimensions of reading sexually explicit texts, a more flexible framework must be theorized. Perhaps the combination of sexuality and \textit{ethica} indicates that the hidden curriculum of medieval schools differs from that of modern schools. The classification of sexually explicit texts as “ethical” is one way of legitimizing classroom discussions around sexuality, although they remain doubly hidden, partly as a sub-category of ethics, and partly as enmeshed with grammatical instruction. While the description or discussion of sexual practices is not an openly acknowledged function of medieval education, the ethical poetic acts as a “value-laden description of human behaviour; it leads to and permits normative judgments of \textit{mores} – of what real people really do, and above all the patterns which their doing implies and

\textsuperscript{39} Jaeger, \textit{Ennobling Love}, 17.
establishes.” This capacity of the ethical poetic means that a wide variety of behaviours, including sexual behaviours, can be explored and discussed.

Medieval accessus, or introductions to works of literature commonly read in schools, offer a valuable perspective on how closely ethics and sexuality are connected. Accessus take various forms over time, but usually act as an overview of the main themes of the text and the pertinent information the student is to remember (such as the title of the work and its meaning, the author’s name and personal history, and formal classification of the work). Twelfth-century accessus have a number of standardized formats, and circulated not only in manuscripts of the auctores themselves, but in collections which compiled accessus to various works. They tend to offer a programmatic overview of the role of texts in the broader reading curriculum, and hint at what the reader’s main focus should be, regardless of the content of the particular commentary he happens to be using.

Accessus in general do not make a major distinction between the author’s intentio and the educational utilitas of these works, reflecting the “literal” approach discussed above.

40 Allen, Ethical Poetic, 37-8.

Works used at the most elementary levels of education, like the Latin versions of Aesop’s fables, or the *Disticha Catonis*, a collection of short maxims, have a clear moral message that is easy to justify in an *accessus*. A twelfth-century *accessus* to the *Disticha Catonis* explains:

(intentio eius est representare nobis qua via tendamus ad veram salutem, et ut diligenter eam appetamus et omni studio inquiramus, non ad tempus, sed perseveranter. utilitas est hunc librum legentibus ut vitam suam sapienter instituere agnoscant. ethice subponitur quia ad utilitatem morum nititur.)

[The author’s] intention is to show us by what road we might reach true salvation, and [he intends] that we may diligently seek it, and strive towards it with all our effort, not just for a little while, but constantly. The utility for those reading this book is that they may understand how to arrange their lives wisely. It is classed under ethics because it contributes to moral development.

This *accessus* frames the *Disticha* as morally instructive, effortlessly aligning the author’s purpose with that of the teacher.

Ovid’s works, especially his amatory works, have a different kind of *utilitas*, yet one which is also repeatedly linked to ethics:

(Intentio sua est in hoc opere iuvenes ad amorem instruere, quo modo debeant se in amore habere circa ipsas puellas. [...] finalis causa est ut perlecto libro in mandatis suis quod tenendum sit in amore ipsis iuvenibus enucleatum sit. ethice subponitur, quia de moribus puellarum loquitur, id est quos mores habeant, quibus modis retineri valeant.)

[The author’s *intentio* in this work is to instruct young men about love, and how they should behave, as regards love, towards girls. The goal is that, once they have read

42 Huygens, *Accessus ad auctores*, 16.
43 Ibid., 28-9.
through the book, the young men should extract whatever should be believed about love from amongst the author’s commandments. It is classified under ethics, because it talks about the habits of girls, that is, what habits they have, and by what methods they can be secured.

Intentio vero ipsius est iuvenes et puellas in amoris arte instruere et peritos reddere, et hoc est principalis intentio que per totum libri discurrir textum. [...] Causa huius intentionis talis est: cum videret Ovidius amatores propter amoris impericiam quosdam ad laqueos, quosdam ad precipicia, quosdam autem ad diversa pericula compelli, idcirco ne amplius talia paciantur eos in amore peritos reddere intendit. utilitas est artificiosi amoris pericia collectione preceptorum comparata. 44

[The author’s intentio is to instruct boys and girls in the art of love and to render them skilled, and this is the main purpose which pervades the entire text of the book. The reason for this intentio is as follows: when Ovid saw some lovers driven into traps, others into precipitous situations, and still others into other kinds of danger, all because of their lack of knowledge about love, he decided to render them skilled so that they would no longer have to suffer such things. The utilitas is the practical knowledge of the art of love compiled in a collection of instructions.]

These accessus frame the Ars Amatoria as a practical instructional manual for lovers; it is considered a genuinely didactic work, rather than a mock-didactic one (which is the more common interpretation today, as it was in the Roman era). Both accessus clearly demonstrate that the utilitas of the work is as a model of behaviour, and as a guide to the behaviour of other people, key components of medieval ethics. The first accessus, which appears in so many manuscripts that Hexter dubs it the “canonical” accessus to the Ars, 45 explicitly links the theme of love and desire, which is central to the text, to

44 Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France lat. 5137-X, Paris BN lat. 5137 102rA; Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France lat. 8302-VI 69rA.

45 Hexter, Ovid and Medieval Schooling, 46-7. This accessus appears in all three accessus collections that make up Huygens’ edition, and many individual manuscripts.
both its educational *utilitas* and its classification as ethical. The *accessus* to *Pamphilus*
quoted at the beginning of this chapter seamlessly links the reading of texts, sexual
performance, and *ethica*, while emphasizing the practical application of the ethical
reading of the text: the (male) reader will learn how to attract women.\(^{46}\)

Juvenal’s satires were also identified both as ethical and as explicitly sexual, although
the lessons to be learned from this text revolved around avoiding, rather than
emulating, specific sexual behaviours. A twelfth-century *accessus* explains the ‘learning
outcomes’ of reading Juvenal’s work as follows: “*Utilitas est, ut cognitis viciis et auditis
et intelligencie iunctis eorum reprehensionibus, semper illis improprietatibus obssistere
consuescamus*” [The utility of the work is that, having heard and understood the vices
and having joined understanding to reprehension of these vices, we may become
accustomed to constantly resisting such inappropriate behaviours].\(^{47}\) While this *accessus*
remains vague about the nature of the vices to be found in Juvenal’s text (after all, there
are so many!), the fact that the reader must constantly remind himself to resist the allure
of these vices suggests a particularly insistent urge. Further information given in
*accessus* suggests that Juvenal’s impetus for writing the satires, and a major theme of the
work, is the problem of sex between men. Two twelfth-century introductions to the

\(^{46}\) Huygens, *Accessus ad auctores*, 53.

\(^{47}\) Löfstedt, *Vier Juvenal-Kommentare*, 3.
work recount that the *Saturae* were initially written to rebuke Nero’s sexual relationship with a male actor named Paris, explaining that Juvenal continued to write satires because “nec in Neronem et Paridem tantum, sed in alios viciose agentes reprehensio eius redundavit” [his reprehension spewed out not just at Nero and Paris, but at others acting out their vice]. Alexander Nequam, writing in the early thirteenth century, remarks that reading Juvenal’s work will help students to strive with all their might to avoid *flagitium naturae* [the disgrace of nature], a phrase which conjures up the more widespread term for male sodomy *vitium contra naturam*, a very common medieval term found in a variety of social and legal contexts. For these commentators, Juvenal’s description of sexual vice is a central component of his work, allowing the reader to learn about the social circumstances in which sexual misconduct occurs, and the consequences for men who “disgrace” themselves, making it easier to identify and avoid illicit sexual behaviours.

Whether ethics as it was defined by teachers was intended to contain formal discussions of sexuality or not, the inclusion of ethical imperatives in the medieval reading curriculum created a space in which sexuality was an acceptable topic. The fact that sexuality was not banished from schools is further attested by its inclusion in works that

48 Ibid., 217.
were written by medieval authors specifically for use in the classroom. In other words, the sexually explicit content of classical texts was not simply tolerated, it was emulated.

As mentioned briefly above, the “Latin comedies” of the twelfth century, which seem to have emerged from the Loire valley schools, adopt and expand on sexually explicit themes in the auctores.⁵⁰ Guillaume of Blois’ Alda, heavily influenced by Terence’s plots, tells the story of a young man who dresses as a woman in order to seduce his (female) lover; this deception is maintained even during sex, because he describes his penis as cauda (a tail). Matthew of Vendôme’s Ars versificatoria, a practical poetics manual for twelfth-century students, contains a running joke about Matthew’s rival “Rufus”, or “Rufinus” (usually identified by scholars as rival teacher Arnulf of Orléans) and his sexual escapades with Thaïs, a red-headed prostitute. Matthew introduces Rufus in the prologue to his text, and peppers the text with references to both Rufus and sexual acts, such as the sample sentence, listed under elegantia, “Sincopat in cohitu mentula crebra sonos” [a large penis gasps out sounds during sex].⁵¹ The inclusion of such explicit language in an otherwise pedantic teaching manual has puzzled modern scholars;

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⁵⁰ Gustave Cohen, ed. La “comédie” latine en France au XIIe siècle 2 vols. (Paris: Société d’édition “Les Belles-Lettres”, 1931). Many of these comedies seem to be loosely based on classical originals, including school auctores, and the number of manuscripts seems to indicate that they were popular in schools, although there has not yet been a definitive survey of any glossing present in the manuscripts.

⁵¹ Matthew of Vendôme, Mathei Vindocinensis Opera ed. Franco Munari (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1988) vol. 3, 156 (or Ars versificatoria 2.37). I think this is an early reference to what is now called “queefing” (noise produced by the movement of air as a result of the motion of the penis in the vagina).
Galyon, who translated the work in 1980, observes that “there often seems to be no reason for his coarse sexual references except his own whims.” On the other hand, the extent of Matthew’s citation of the auctores, including Ovid’s amatory works and Juvenal’s satires, seems to suggest a link between the sexual content in his classical exemplars of poetry and his twelfth-century manual. Arnulf of Orléans demonstrates another seamless combination of the sexually explicit and the scholastic when he provides his students with an etymology for connus (probably a variant of cunnus, vagina): “connum vocat membra puellarum propter innumeratas que in eo sunt cellulas” [girls’ parts are called “connum” because of the many chambers that are in them].

As demonstrated in the accessus presented above, the study of ethics subsumed sexuality as a legitimate topic for classroom discussion, because of its relationship to human behaviour and decision-making. The presence of sexually explicit material in the auctores, who were held in very high regard, allowed medieval teachers, who in many ways derived their own authority and cultural capital from mastery of the auctores texts, to incorporate their own discussions of sexuality into contemporary teaching materials.


53 See Galyon, The Art of Versification, 17 for a list of classical sources identified in the text itself; see the critical apparatus of Munari’s edition for a better sense of the number of unattributed citations.

This practice was certainly not universal; concerns were raised, especially in monastic pedagogical sources, about the wisdom of incorporating sex into the classroom.

2.4 Using *ad cautelam* with caution

Some of the medieval sources I have cited above suggest that the ethical purpose of reading sexually explicit texts is a proscriptive one – to prevent socially unacceptable behaviour. A wide variety of sexual acts and queer possibilities may be described over the course of a reading of the *auctores*, but only so that the student can understand that this behaviour is wrong. This approach is sometimes referred to in medieval sources as *ad cautelam*, meaning that the text functions as a warning.\(^{55}\) John W. Baldwin has argued that the idea of *ad cautelam* adequately explains the use of Ovid’s *Ars amatoria*, and especially his *Remedia amoris* in twelfth-century schools.\(^{56}\) He cites a *questio* from the classroom of Peter the Chanter (Petrus Cantor, d.1197) about whether the *Ars amatoria* should be read in schools. Peter sees that the approach of *accessus* which frame the work as didactic could lead to a serious problem if students treat the *Ars* as a practical manual for seduction:


Omnis scientia est a deo, sed ars amandi est scientia. Ergo est a deo. Ergo est bona. Ergo eius usus bonus est. Si enim eius usus esset malus, ipsa esset mala, quod dici non posset cum sit a deo. Nullum enim malum a deo est.  

[All true knowledge (scientia) is from God, but the art of loving is true knowledge. Therefore it is from God. Therefore it is good. Therefore its practical use is good. If its practice were bad, the thing itself would be bad, which cannot be said because it is from God. For nothing bad comes from God.]

There is an obvious tension in this questio between the accuracy of the Ars Amatoria as scientia and its effectiveness in practice. Peter ends up specifying that the purpose of teaching the art of love is not practical application, but as a warning (ad cautelam).

Peter explains that, while everything God creates is inherently good, some things, like poison, are good in themselves, but bad if used. Furthermore, sexual behaviour must be evaluated in a social context: a man can perform the same sex act with a prostitute as he does with his legal wife, but these acts are valued differently.  

This is exactly the kind of sexual distinction students must learn as part of an ethical education, as I have discussed above. Peter concludes that the art of love, insofar as it is a truthful

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57 Baldwin, Language of Sex, 251. (My translation)
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid., “...venenum bonum est quia a deo, et tamen eius usus malus.”
60 Baldwin, “L’ars amatoria au XIIe siècle”, 26. Peter explains that in the second case there is no sin because this is the rendering of the marital debt.
description of life, is inherently good, but it becomes bad if we choose to exploit it by putting it into practice.61

So far Peter has not used the expression *ad cautelam*, and appears to be making a philosophical argument based on the difference between the essence and potentiality of created things. In the end, though, he argues strongly against any practical application of the art, in response to what seems like a tongue-in-cheek followup to the original *questio*: is a teacher who teaches the art in fact practicing it, and thus guilty of mortal sin?62 Absolutely not, says Peter, the teacher is merely passing along this art *ad cautelam*, not for practical use (“Doctor vero tradit eam, non ad usum, sed ad cautelam”). The teacher himself is neither an expert in the practical application of the art (something which is heavily implied by the question) nor an advocate for its use, but a cautious middle-man.63

This response does not make a negative judgment on the moral value of Ovid’s work in itself, but attributes any sinfulness to the reader, or user, of the text (“nos abutimur ea et convertimus ad peiorem usum”). The doubled interpretation of coitus as

61 Baldwin, *Language of Sex*, 251. “Ars igitur amatoria bona est in se, sed nos abutimur ea et convertimus ad peiorem usum.”

62 Ibid., “Ergo ille qui docet artem amatoriam, nonne utitur ea et peccat mortaliter?”

63 This is most likely in contrast to Ovid himself, who emphasizes at AA 1.25-9 that his knowledge was not granted by the gods, or other supernatural means, but through direct experience. See my discussion below.
simultaneously sinful and lawful suggests that sexual actors must learn to make a context-dependent distinction between licit and illicit sex, as ethical readers and actors. Overall, though, Peter’s argument is a formal one and avoids addressing the basic fact that Ovid’s text was considered a manual for seduction by most medieval readers. As a well-argued justification for the use of sexually explicit texts in the classroom, it seems obviously flawed: although poison is technically good, as a divinely created thing, its use is unambiguously bad (like the use of the *Ars* by clerics-in-training), so the question remains, why give your students poison and simply hope that they won’t use it? Why not keep them away from it entirely? As the student in Conrad of Hirsau’s *Dialogus super auctores* himself asks,

Cum tanta nobis subpetant, quorum honesta lectio nos ingenio quidem acuit et provocat ad virtutes, cur scripta viciosa sunt appetenda, quorum sensus inficit studiis exercitanda ingenia? Cur ovidianis libris Christi tyrunculus docile summittat ingenium, in quibus etsi potest aurum in stercore inveniri, querentem tamen pollut ipse fetor adiacens auro, licet avidum auri? 64

[When so many works are at hand which can sharpen our perception and instill virtue, if we read them correctly, why must we seek writings full of vice, whose meaning infects minds being trained to study? Why must a young soldier of Christ submit his intelligence to the books of Ovid, which, although they contain gold amongst the filth, pollute the seeker with the stink that clings to the gold, no matter how avid he is for the gold itself?]

This perspective was quite common in pedagogical texts emerging from twelfth-century monasteries, which generally framed their own methods as diametrically opposed to

64 Huygens, *Accessus ad auctores*, 114
those of the more secular (cathedral or grammar) schools which were their main competitors. Alexander Nequam (c. 1157-1217), who taught and studied at both monastic and secular schools, also remarks that “viris autenticis” [respected men] say Ovid’s amatory works should be kept away from adolescents; he himself seems not to agree, as he recommends “elegias Nasonis et Ovidium Metamorfoseos audiat, sed et precipue libellum De remedio amoris familiarem habeat” [let him hear Naso’s elegies and the Metamorphoses of Ovid, but let him be especially familiar with the little book Remedia amoris]. Despite all pedagogical precautions, Ovid was known to stir up emotions in young boys. Teachers who used his texts in the classroom could not rely on interpretation ad cautelam to control these emotions, but addressed them using a variety of strategies. The next section will examine how medieval teachers used the structure of the rules for love to explore the connections between love, sex and learning.

So far, I have outlined a complex relationship between ethics and sexuality in the educational curriculum. The ethical reader can project himself into a text, and can also deploy a text as a way of conceiving or reframing his own actions; when the ethical reader becomes a reader of sex, he must engage with both real and imaginary bodies

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65 Hunt, Teaching and Learning Latin, vol. 1, 269-70. Nequam doesn’t make it clear which “elegias” he means, but Hexter seems convinced Nequam is referring to the Epistulae ex Ponto. (See Hexter, Ovid and Medieval Schooling, 18).

66 See my discussion in Chapter 1.
and desires and is given a vocabulary with which to do so. The connection between schooling, especially grammar, and sex presents a different kind of mechanism, one through which this somewhat unruly process acquires a more stable order. When sex comes into the school, it becomes subject to rules, just as grammar does.

2.5 Learning the rules for love

Quis docebit nos in amore? Ego qui sum magister artis.67

[Who will teach us about love? I, who am the master of this art].

Ovid is widely known during the eleventh and twelfth centuries as the magister amoris, or teacher of love.68 While his Metamorphoses were widely copied and read as an encyclopedia of classical mythology, his fame as a writer in the medieval era is mainly as a love elegist. His amatory works, especially the Ars Amatoria, Remedia Amoris, and Heroides became increasingly common in school collections, perhaps because of the relative simplicity of elegiac couplets and the brevity of the works themselves

67 Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek Gl. kgl. Saml. 2015 4o, folio 15v (glossing AA 1.5).

68 Ovid himself is the ultimate source of this appellation, of course; he calls himself praeceptor amoris at AA 1.17. Medieval sources often call him magister; see discussion below. For an overview of the medieval reception of Ovid’s amatory works, see Hexter, Ovid and Medieval Schooling or Marilynn Desmond, “Venus’ clerk: Ovid’s amatory poetry in the Middle Ages” in A Handbook to the Reception of Ovid, ed. John F. Miller and Carole E. Newlands (Chichester: John Wiley and sons, 2014), 161-173.
compared to the epic poetry that comprised much of the rest of the curriculum. As Hexter has demonstrated, and as the *accessus* discussed above show, Ovid’s tongue-in-cheek declaration that the *Ars amatoria* is a didactic work was widely taken at face value in medieval schools. The *Ars* was often contrasted with Ovid’s *Remedia amoris*, which, according to medieval accounts, was written to soothe the pain of readers whose success with the rules of the *Ars* led them into ruin. The *Remedia* was more popular than the *Ars* in medieval schools, possibly due to its putatively negative take on love and sex, but more likely because of its length, a mere 814 lines. It is important to note that Ovid’s amatory works were not part of the *auctores* curriculum of classical or late antique schools, and thus did not have as long a history of glossing or commentary as other *auctores*, such as Terence. They were incorporated into medieval schools

69 Desmond, “Venus’ clerk”, 162 says that “the short, two-line semantic units of the elegiac couplet” make it well-suited for teaching Latin grammar.

70 See Huygens, *Accessus ad auctores*, 29 for a typical medieval interpretation. This *accessus* explains that boys used the rules in the *Ars* to seduce married women or relatives (*consanguineas*) as well as single women; Ovid was exiled as a punishment for the social havoc he had caused. See also Minnis’ discussion of the medieval *vita Ovidii*. Alaistair Minnis, “The Author’s Two Bodies: Authority and Fallibility in Late-Medieval Textual Theory” in *Of the Making of Books: Medieval Manuscripts, their Scribes and Readers. Essays Presented to M. B. Parkes*, ed. P. R. Robinson and Rikvah Zim, (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997), 260.

71 In fact, as Hexter and others have remarked, the *Remedia* is at least as explicit as the *Ars*, if not more so, in terms of its description of sexual desire and sexual acts. Many of the “cures” Ovid proposes involve having more sex, either with your lover, to wear out your desire, or with multiple partners, to take your mind off her, surely not typically “moral” solutions. The short length of the text makes it a good candidate for the classroom, though, as it could easily be read through from beginning to end.

72 Although, among Ovid’s works, the *Ars amatoria* has one of the earliest glossed manuscripts, the so-called “St Dunstan’s classbook”, dating to the ninth century. Hexter, *Ovid and Medieval Schooling*, 25.
gradually, in select locations, over a long period of time. Ovid’s works became more and more commonly read and imitated over the eleventh and twelfth centuries, leading Traube to declare the twelfth century the beginning of the *aetas Ovidiana*. While this assessment has been revised by modern scholars, based on the fact that Ovid’s amatory works have an extensive reception history throughout the earlier middle ages as well, it is certainly true that these works were copied and distributed at a much higher rate during the twelfth century, especially in northern France and southern Germany. Urban schools were an important vector for the transmission of these works, and teachers also began to write entirely new commentaries and glosses to facilitate teaching and reading.

The schools of the Loire valley, especially the school of Orléans, were closely associated with the study of Ovid in the twelfth century, and are mentioned in many contemporary poems and songs. Three prominent commentators on Ovid’s works,

73 Olsen has noted that there are relatively few manuscripts extant prior to the thirteenth century, especially given Ovid’s renown in the eleventh and twelfth centuries; library lists provide slightly more evidence for the reading of Ovid’s amatory works in twelfth-century schools in England, France, and Germany. Birger Munk Olsen, “Ovide au Moyen Age (du IXe au XIe siècle)” in *La Réception de la littérature classique au Moyen Age*, ed. Karsten Friis-Jensen, (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1995), 71-94.


Fulco, Arnulf and the lesser-known William, taught at Orléans. Fulco and Arnulf both wrote commentaries on most of Ovid’s works, while William assembled a collection of shorter glosses into a work he calls the *Busarii Ovidianorum*. Fulco’s and Arnulf’s commentaries circulate as freestanding works, apart from the base text. In addition, about half of the extant manuscripts of Ovid’s amatory works have marginal glosses. Because the study of the twelfth-century commentaries to Ovid is still in its infancy, it is difficult to determine the relationship between the glossed copies and commentaries, although Coulson and Roy’s “finding guide” has made it immensely easier to identify and relate commentaries to one another. For the purposes of this project I have examined Fulco’s commentary on book 1 of the *Ars amatoria* (generally the most glossed book in most school texts) in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France lat. 5137-X, fols. 102rA-104vB and Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek Gl. kgl. Saml. 2015 4°, fols. 15v-24r, as well as William of Orléans’ *Bursarii Ovidianorum* edited by Engelbrecht and

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76 Hugues V. Shooner, “Les *Bursarii Ovidianorum* de Guillaume d’Orléans”, *Mediaeval Studies* 43 (1981), 405-24. This work exists in at least 6 manuscripts as a self-contained commentary, but also circulates as a set of marginal glosses (see pg. 419).


79 See Coulson and Roy, *Incipitarium* #173 (pg 67) and #56 (pp 40-1). I also consulted Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France lat. 8302-VI, fols. 69vB-72vB, which has the same commentary by Fulco as BN lat. 5137, but is damaged. The version of the commentary in these exemplars focuses heavily on Book I. Coulson and Roy, *Incipitarium*, list Copenhagen, Gl kgl. Saml. 1905 4°, fols 17r-24r as containing the same commentary as these two. GKS 2015 is a commentary on the entire text of the *AA*, which consists of an
Arnulf of Orléans’ glosule on the *Remedia amoris* edited by Roy and Shooner.⁸⁰ BN lat. 5137’s commentary has been attributed to Fulco of Orléans, and is a perfect example of the “literal” approach discussed earlier in this chapter. Fulco tends to repeat whatever Ovid says in simpler words, moving quickly through the text, adding brief explanations of mythological figures or place names, but for the most part emphasizing the sense of the base text. The section of the commentary in GKS 2015 which is not Fulco’s is also quite literal, but adds more information about the rhetorical structure of the text, and less information about mythology. Both commentaries stay very close to the base text, glossing every few lines, and identifying the *praeccepta*, or rules, the reader is supposed to follow. The nature of the *Bursarii*, as a “purse” or pocket guide to the *cruces* of Ovid’s works,⁸¹ means that the discussion of the *Ars* is much more cursory. William generally avoids discussing the most explicit sections of the *Ars* and *Remedia*.⁸² Arnulf’s thorough

unidentified *accessus* and commentary up to 17r (to AA 1.171), at which point the commentary jumps back to AA 1.89 and aligns with Fulco’s commentary from that point on. See Olsen, *L’étude des auteurs classiques*, vol. 4, pt. 1, 89; Shooner, “Les *Bursarii*”, 410-11n17, Hexter, *Ovid and Medieval Schooling*, 44-5.


commentary on the Remedia, which he claims will “cure” students deceived by Fulco’s commentary, is relentlessly literal and explanatory, glossing every few lines, but avoiding protracted discussions of either rhetorical techniques or mythological references. Unlike William, Arnulf does not shy away from discussing bodily functions and sexual positions in his commentary, evoking such topics as sperm (glossing RA 413) and the vagina (glossing RA 411).

Although the interpretation ad cautelam is unsatisfying as a justification for the increasingly common inclusion of the Ars in twelfth- and thirteenth-century schoolbooks, other interpretations have been notably lacking in contemporary scholarship. When Desmond eloquently remarks that the twelfth-century classroom’s typically didactic reading of the Ars renders it “a rather banal conduct book on sexual performance”, perfectly suited for students who would then lead “lives of clerical celibacy in which they would be expected to uphold heterosexual ideals but not to participate in marital sexuality and to simultaneously shun same-sex desire”, she does

83 Roy and Shooner, “Arnulfi Aurelianensis ‘Glosule’”, 150, suggest that this is due both to the nature of glosule, which aim merely to explain “l’essentiel du texte” and to the fact that the Remedia would have been the fourth Ovidian text in Arnulf’s cursus, after the Heroïdes, Amores, and Ars amatoria, so that many myths would already have been explained in previous commentaries.

84 Roy and Shooner, “Arnulfi Aurelianensis ‘Glosule’”, 166
so only in passing, as though this is common knowledge.\textsuperscript{85} It most certainly is not, as many other scholars have treated the use of the \textit{Ars} in medieval schools as a curiosity, or an inconvenient fact to be explained away.\textsuperscript{86}

The \textit{accessus} to the \textit{Ars} presented above show that medieval teachers had no such need to explain away the content of this love manual, instead presenting it as an effective set of rules whose purpose was to render the reader skilled in the art of love. Of course, to medieval Christian readers the notion of maintaining control over one’s body and emotions, a concept central to Roman masculinity, mocked by Ovid in the \textit{Ars} and elsewhere, was still a very compelling one. The monastic \textit{habitus}, based as it was on formal rules which outlined not only daily rituals to be performed and spiritual meditations, but many other guidelines governing personal relationships, feelings and thoughts, framed rules as a vital organizing principle for living a virtuous life. Twelfth-century secular clerics, too, were under increasing pressure to live under a rule, like

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Marilynn Desmond, \textit{Ovid’s Art and the Wife of Bath: the Ethics of Erotic Violence} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 52
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
their monastic counterparts. It should not be too surprising that a text laying out rules for living with, and fulfilling, desire would be interpreted literally during this period.

Even less surprising is the close association between love and the medieval grammar curriculum. As I outlined in Chapter 1, medieval training in grammar was closely associated with both physical and mental discipline. If Lady Grammar can whip students, and trim their lips with a knife, and teachers can beat students using a regula in order to make sure they measure up, the magister amoris also aims to shape students’ bodies and minds. Desmond has remarked that the Ars, in the setting of the medieval classroom, becomes a poem about “managing” the effects of amor. In fact, the Ars as a school text combines several levels of mastery since the text, as part of the curriculum, itself becomes an object for mastery (grammatically and lexically), and the source of information about a set of real-world social behaviours to be mastered (the art of love). Ovid’s authorial persona as the praeceptor amoris strengthens the association between teaching, mastery and desire that pervades the medieval school curriculum, codifying

87 Philippe Delhaye, “L’organisation scolaire au XIIe siècle” Traditio 5 (1947), 211-268. Delhaye connects this trend to eleventh- and twelfth- century reforms, and to the proliferation of houses of canons regular during this period.

88 Desmond, “Venus’ clerk”, 162.
“the concept that a pedagogical imperative attaches to the experience of amor; that is, that the onset of amor must be attended by instruction.”

### 2.6 Mastering sex

Ovid asserts his mastery over both love and adolescent readers at the very beginning of the *Ars Amatoria*. He explains that love can be steered, just as a ship or a chariot can, as long as you know the right method. Commentaries emphasize that Ovid’s expertise is practical rather than theoretical. Glossing AA 1.25-30, where Ovid explains that his knowledge does not come from a supernatural source, but from experience, Fulco explains:

Diceret aliquis, ‘tu habes hanc scientiam a Phebo, vel ab avibus, vel a musis, sicut habent alii poetae’. Ad hoc dicit se non habuisse nec ab isto nec ab illo, sed a solo usu.

[Someone might say, “You got this knowledge from Apollo, or from the birds, or from the Muses, just as other poets have done”. To this, he replies that he did not get it from any of those sources, but only from experience.]

This emphasizes both the practicality of Ovid’s advice and the active engagement of the *magister amoris* with his field of expertise. Unlike the schoolteacher described by

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89 Ibid., 164.

90 AA 1.3-4.

91 BN lat. 5137, fol. 102vA, lines 23-25. NB: I have added punctuation and capitalization to all quotations from my transcriptions, so that they are more easily readable; any underlined lemmata reflect the notation in the manuscripts. GKS 2015, fol. 16r, line 6 also explains “non habuisse illam de aliquo nisi solo usu” [he does not have [this knowledge] from anyone but from experience alone].
Peter the Chanter, Ovid both teaches and practices his own art: “obtimus et peritisimus sum magister et artifex amoris”.\textsuperscript{92}

Ovid is not only the master of a body of knowledge, however, but of a personified adolescent; he explains that although love is \textit{ferus} [fierce], it can be ruled, because it is merely a boy of \textit{aetas mollis} [a tender age] (AA1.9-10). Just like the centaur Chiron, Achilles’ first teacher, who taught Achilles to play the lyre and helped tame his wild spirit through corporal punishment, Ovid claims that he will be love’s teacher, and bend it to his will (AA 1.11-18).

Ostendit et probat per exemplum quod possit amor regi et domari, quamvis sit ferus et repugnet, quia puer est; sicut Achilles, quamvis ferus esset, tamen magistrum suum timebat. Et potuit domari et regi a magistro suo, scilicet Chirone.\textsuperscript{93}

[Ovid demonstrates and proves by an example that love can be ruled, and dominated (although he is fierce and fights back) because he is a boy. In the same way Achilles, although he was fierce, nevertheless feared his teacher (namely Chiron), and could be dominated and ruled by him.]

Medieval students who read this passage might already have been familiar with the story of Achilles and Chiron, as told in Statius’ \textit{Achilleid}, in which Achilles learns to hunt with a group of ferocious centaurs.\textsuperscript{94} Chiron served as an archetype of an excellent teacher in both the classical period and the middle ages, and Ovid is thus linking

\textsuperscript{92} BN lat. 5137, fol. 102rA, lines 9-11.
\textsuperscript{93} BN lat. 5137, fol. 102rB, lines 23-26.
\textsuperscript{94} Statius, \textit{Achilleid} 1.302.
himself to a very familiar, conventional image of the teacher, despite his field of expertise. He uses the same methods as all great teachers, including fear and corporal punishment. The ability of a teacher to dominate his student and inspire fear is seen as positive, and totally normalised, in Fulco’s commentary. It is part of the cycle of “pederastic insemination” in which students are harshly disciplined by their teachers, then grow up to take on the dominant role themselves. Another of Fulco’s glosses on this passage explains “[..] puer est et talem etatis quam leviter posset regi. Nam puerile etas est mollis, idest flexibile” [... he is a boy and of such an age that he can easily be ruled. For the boyish age is soft, that is, flexible]. The adolescent age of the student makes him especially suited for this kind of harsh instruction – mollis etas means “a tender age”, and Fulco’s gloss clearly acknowledges his understanding of the Roman notion of adolescence as “slippery”. But the meaning of mollis in classical Latin can also denote a negative, unmasculine kind of “softness”, one which is prized in young adolescent boys but not in adults. Ovid’s use of mollis in connection with Achilles at AA 1.8 may imply that Achilles was not always as fierce as he seemed at first; after his early

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96 See my discussion in Chapter 1.

97 BN lat. 5137, fol. 102rB, lines 21-2.

98 See Chapter 3 below.
instruction by Chiron he goes on to live as a woman for several years.\textsuperscript{99} Fulco’s gloss is equally suggestive, since \textit{mollis} is a description often associated with the receptive partner in male sodomy in both classical and medieval Latin. Fulco clearly understands Ovid’s mixed metaphor, which combines the traditional image of a stern teacher with homoerotic notions of physically dominating, or even riding, a feisty young boy.\textsuperscript{100} Although he begins by stating that he will teach the reader an ‘art’ by which to love, Ovid ends up combining his student and his subject of expertise into one personification: he will be the teacher of Love himself, mastering both the subject and the boy simultaneously.\textsuperscript{101}

Ovid’s role as teacher is further emphasized by the questions and answers peppering Fulco’s commentary (like “Quis docebit nos?” above). Hexter suggests that this is part of a sophisticated medieval interpretation of Ovid’s complex rhetoric.\textsuperscript{102} In fact, the commentaries on Ovid share this feature with many other school texts, such as Donatus’ \textit{Ars minor}, which begins with a series of questions and answers, and

\textsuperscript{99} Heslin, \textit{Transvestite Achilles}, 193. Ovid is one of the only authors to recount this story prior to Statius. Ovid gives an account of Achilles’ cross-dressing, and rape of Deidamia, at \textit{AA} 1.681-704.

\textsuperscript{100} See \textit{AA} 1.19-22, where Ovid talks about yoking oxen, riding horses etc.


\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 303
commentaries on other auctores, like Juvenal. For Ovid to be an effective teacher, he must be able to ask and answer questions, a quality his medieval commentators provide alongside his praecepta. The Ovid of the schoolroom clearly evokes images of classroom discipline and procedure, with his commentators’ assistance. The details of his method for mastering love are likewise reframed as rules, akin to those of grammar or syntax.

2.7 Reading the rules

Ovid introduces his work as a practical manual for love, outlined in clearly written praecepta, or rules. Many medieval commentaries are focused on identifying and explaining these praecepta, in terms that resemble the explanation of grammatical principles. While Ovid’s self-ascribed persona as praeceptor and method of teaching have obvious parallels to the medieval classroom, medieval commentators complete his transformation by codifying his text into easily memorized praecepta. William of Orléans, in keeping with the generalized character of his commentary, uses the structure of the text itself to identify the broad precepts Ovid mentions at the beginning of his work: finding girls, convincing them to sleep with you, and keeping them (AA 1.35-38).

Exsecuto primo libro, in quo duo executa sunt precepta, scilicet ubi amica possit inveniri et quomodo inventa possit exorari, in hoc secundo tercium exsequitur preceptum, scilicet quomodo debeat retineri.\textsuperscript{104}

[Here ends the first book, in which two precepts are laid out, namely, where a girlfriend can be found and how, once found, she can be convinced. In this second book the third precept follows, namely, how she must be retained.]

This is quite similar to the overview of the entire Ars that is found in many accessus, and the other commentaries gloss AA 1.35-38 in a similar way.\textsuperscript{105} But the other commentators also take a more detailed approach to identifying specific precepts beyond “locate – win over – keep”, constantly reminding the student that he is supposed to be looking for praeccepta using prompts encoded throughout the commentaries. The commentator of the first section of GKS 2015 tells the student that there are various levels of praeccepta, explaining that Ovid “ponit itaque tria precepta generalia sub quibus continentur et alia specialia” [thus Ovid proposes three general precepts under which other individual precepts are also classed] (glossing AA 1.35-38).\textsuperscript{106} These more specialized precepts are identified here and there with such phrases as “scilicet preceptum” and “ecce!”\textsuperscript{107} Many glosses marked by capitalized “Ecce!” occur in the sections where Ovid is outlining various places to meet women,

\[\text{\textsuperscript{104} Engelbrecht, Busarii super Ovidios, 86.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{105} eg GKS 2015, fol. 16r; BN 5137, fol. 102vA.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{106} GKS 2015, fol. 16r, line 24.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{107} GKS 2015 fol. 16r., line 31; fol. 16v, line 2 (superscript “ecce”, above “preceptum do”); fol. 16v, line 16; other “ecces” are in the sections by Fulco and are capitalized in GKS 2015, eg fol. 17v.}\]
creating a kind of hit list, such as the gloss to AA 1.229-30 "Ecce alius locus ad quem invitat, scilicet ad convivia ubi conveniebant puellae" [Behold! another place he invites you to look, namely, at parties where girls are gathered].

While Ovid is known as the magister amoris in the Ars amatoria, in the Remedia amoris he claims to be a doctor, using imagery of sickness and health to describe "cures" for love. Medieval commentators read the text as a continuation of the Ars amatoria, as the author clearly intended, and link his two personas as doctor and teacher: "intentio suo est dare precepta ad remedia habenda, ut ostendat quod non minus sciebat ab amore retrahere quam instruere" [the author’s purpose is to provide precepts for cures, so that he might demonstrate that he knew how to retreat from love just as well as he knew how to teach love]. Arnulf’s commentary identifies praecepta, and uses them to guide the student through the various sections of the text, just as his colleagues do for the Ars. He uses similar techniques, including the interjection "ecce!", for example, in the gloss to RA 579, after one of Ovid’s signature digressions: "ecce redit ad precepta, et hoc est primum, scilicet ut sotietatem queramus et solitudinem fugiamus" [behold! he returns

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108 GKS 2015, fol. 17v, line 35.

109 Bruno Roy and Hugues Shooner, “Arnulfi Aurelianensis ‘Glosule’", 155. Ovid refers to the Ars several times in the Remedia; medieval commentators also interpreted AA 1.24-5, where Ovid talks about getting back at Love, as a reference to the Remedia.
to his precepts, and this is the first one, namely that we should seek company and avoid solitude.\textsuperscript{110}

These interventions by the commentators disrupt the use of the \textit{Ars} as a means to a purely grammatical end, or as a cultural artifact from the distant past.\textsuperscript{111} They serve to continually frame the text as a rule book, one which contains rhetorical, stylistic and cultural information, but a rule book all the same. The use of the present tense in many of the \textit{praeccepta} (“Docet diversa loca ubi possunt inveniri” [Ovid teaches various places where they can be found])\textsuperscript{112} as opposed to the explanations of myths (“Danaus vero habuit quinquaginta filias” [Danaus had fifty daughters])\textsuperscript{113} emphasizes the continuing relevance and lasting truth of the rules. Whether he intended it or not, Ovid’s rules help to categorize sexually available and unavailable women, public and private spaces and the social customs associated with them, and codify gendered behaviour for men and women. This information is as important to celibate clerics who might someday work as lawyers or clerks at a royal court as it would be for those seeking sex – both must perform an appropriate masculinity and interpret the performance of others. And while

\textsuperscript{110} Roy and Shooner, “Arnulfi Aurelianensis ‘Glosule’”, 170.

\textsuperscript{111} These are the interpretations suggested in Hexter, “Sex Education”, 314.

\textsuperscript{112} BN lat. 5137, fol. 102vB, lines 11-12.

\textsuperscript{113} BN lat. 5137, fol. 102vB, line 19.
medieval commentators do occasionally interject that a Roman custom differs from the present day (with the words *mos erat*), most of the time “all is as Ovid ‘says’ it is.”

A modern perspective on this mock-didactic work might frame it in terms of the impossibility of desire’s true fulfilment, and the inherent failure of the concept of “rules” to describe or control human desire and behaviour. The medieval perspective, taking the rules at their word, makes an even more poignant juxtaposition between the *Ars* and the *Remedia*, because when you succeed at following one set of rules (those for love), you become unhappy and must “unschool” yourself using another set of rules. This perspective is probably what made it superficially appropriate for use in schools.

But the deeper link between the pedagogy of the two texts is the notion that desire must be translated into a learned performance: despite its premise, the *Remedia* simply elaborates on the performance begun in the *Ars*. Unlike Cupid himself, the *magister amoris* can both stir up and cure male lust, putting him in control of the entire cycle of desire.

This is not to suggest that the primary purpose of reading the *Ars* was to train clerics to go out and find a date, but that we should look more closely at the ways in which schooling, rule-making, sexuality and grammar are connected. While the *magister amoris* and his commentators link the learning of rules with gendered performances of

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sexuality, other sources link such performances more closely to formal schooling, and to grammar.

2.8 Making sense of sexual grammar

Ovid’s *Ars amatoria* and *Remedia amoris* as read by their respective medieval commentary traditions frame love and desire as subjects which can be accurately circumscribed by rules. The methods for imparting and learning these rules mirror the traditional educational methods of the grammar-school teacher, and as part of the real grammar curriculum of medieval schools, sexual desire is folded into a subject closely connected with elite masculine prowess, especially for clerics, who did not have access to traditional ways of asserting their masculinity. But the connection between grammar and sexuality sketched out by this reading of the *Ars* and *Remedia* is only one very small aspect of a much larger twelfth-century conceptual framework in which grammar and human behaviour are linked. Alford has documented “the grammatical metaphor”, a term which encompasses a wide range of meanings, from the religious, to the comic, to the sexual.\(^{115}\) While many of these broader metaphors explore the relationship between human speech, human action and divine truths, the grammatical-sexual metaphors tend to focus on the ways in which the structures of grammar and social structures are

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mirrors of one another. Many grammatical-sexual metaphors are based on the fact that grammatical terms have dual meanings, one of which is sexual, in a tradition extending from classical to medieval Latin. A classic example is the term *ictus*, which can refer both to a metrical beat and to “the male sexual act” (presumably meaning either penetration or thrusting), according to Adams’ *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*. The notion of grammatical gender can likewise evoke the gendering of living bodies; grammatical “actions” such as joining or subordinating can evoke sexual acts; many other plays on words involve the names and functions of Latin cases such as dative (giving) and ablative (taking away). The twelfth century saw a particular flourishing of such metaphors. Perhaps the most famous, and certainly the most extensive, use of grammatical metaphors for sexual practices occurs in Alan of Lille’s *De planctu Naturae*.  


118 Alan of Lille, *Literary Works* ed. and trans. Winthrop Wetherbee (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013). This edition uses the Latin of Häring’s 1978 edition, but has introduced a numbering system that reflects the sections identified in the original text. All my references will be to the chapter and paragraph numbers in the prose sections of the work, or to the chapter and line number in the verse sections, as numbered in Wetherbee’s edition. Translations are my own unless otherwise noted; Wetherbee’s translation is far more elegant than mine but does not always bring out the specific educational-grammatical-sexual meanings which are the focus of my own reading of the text.
Alan’s text links the formal rules of grammar with “natural” rules governing sexual behaviour. As we have seen, medieval interpretations of the *Ars amatoria* and *Remedia amoris* suggested that “rules” for desire and sexual performance are a legitimate part of an ethical education, despite anxieties to the contrary on the part of some teachers. But Alan’s use of grammar as a metaphor for sex (and vice versa) highlights the inherent instability of both systems, and the artificial nature of the “rules” for both grammar and sex: both systems allow for a range of expression, for misuse and misunderstanding, and for radical reinterpretation. To construct grammar and sexuality as rule-based, learned systems is to allow for the possibility of breaking rules, or of mislearning them, while the wide variety of sexual practices depicted in the *auctores* curriculum suggests an elasticity to Nature’s rules themselves. By linking grammar with sex, Alan demonstrates a twelfth-century perspective on the role of enculturation through schooling.

In *De planctu Naturae*, a personified Nature laments the sorry state of human morality and addresses the negative consequences of free will for humans, using a plethora of grammatical terms to describe sexual impropriety. Little is known about Alan of Lille’s life, aside from the fact that he clearly studied in the cathedral schools of the Loire.

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valley, and in Paris, before teaching in Paris himself; late in life, he entered the Cistercian order, and died at Cîteaux in 1202 or 1203.\textsuperscript{119} He is the author of a number of theological works, as well as a penitential manual and \textit{Ars predicandi} which were widely copied throughout the later middle ages.\textsuperscript{120} Alan’s literary work is notoriously difficult to translate, and sometimes even to read, because of the highly scholastic register of his Latin and the complexity of the imagery he deploys. This is perhaps more problematic for modern readers than it was for medieval and early modern readers, since both his \textit{Anticlaudianus} and \textit{De planctu Naturae} became popular school texts.\textsuperscript{121} While \textit{De planctu} does not seem to have had a huge circulation at the time it was written, many of the oldest manuscripts are from Northern France, suggesting that it was used earlier here than in other regions.\textsuperscript{122}

In \textit{De planctu Naturae}, Alan recounts a vision in which Nature, in the form of an attractive, elegantly clothed young woman, visits him to explain her own role in human life, and the complex problem of human sexual deviancy. One of the main targets of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[120] Ibid., ix
\item[121] Wetherbee, \textit{Literary Works}, ix; cf. Häring, “\textit{De planctu Naturae}”, 802. Häring’s survey of manuscripts found that the text was rarely quoted before the fourteenth century, and most copied in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.
\item[122] Häring, “\textit{De planctu Naturae}”, 801.
\end{footnotes}
Nature’s diatribes is the practice of sex between men, because the sodomite perverts Nature’s “grammar” by confounding active and passive roles, thus calling his own gender into question. Nature also outlines the roles of other quasi-mythological figures, including Venus, whose “school” is the source of many sexual perversions, Venus’ husband Hymen and son Cupid, who serve as her assistants, Venus’ lover Antigenius and their son Iocus, and finally Genius, who is Nature’s equal and sentences humankind to permanent exile at the end of the poem. Along the way, Nature deploys many images of both the arts of the trivium and more practical arts, including writing and copying, drawing, the use of wax tablets, parchment and pens, and the forging of metals. The productive nature of language, texts, craftsmanship, and sexual reproduction all function as shifting metaphors for one another.

The text’s play with bodies and language, especially its implication that the created world is the result of linguistic processes, makes it easily susceptible to structuralist and post-structuralist interpretations. Alan’s text also contains a plethora of contradictions which confuse the boundaries of bodies, meaning and language, equating sodomitic

\[123\] Although, as Jordan points out, Nature does not use the term “sodomy” or any related medieval term. Mark D. Jordan, The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 80, 87.

\[124\] Interestingly, called “gignasium” (at DPN 8.20 and 10.9), presumably as a variant of “gymnasium”...but it also calls to mind gignere, in another perfect grammatical-sexual metaphor, one involving a spelling mistake AND one of conjugation! (gignere should become genitus).
“vice” with grammatical “vice” and with the excesses of hermaphroditism, while ignoring the aspects of conventional grammar which reinforce notions of same-sex attraction (adjectival agreement, for one) or gender fluidity (the neuter case, or the paradox of grammatical gender in phrases such as “femininus sexus”).

Alan’s blend of wordplay with sexual imagery has intrigued many modern scholars. Leupin’s influential study of *De planctu* in *Barbarolexis* sets out many facets of the work that influenced later scholars. For Leupin, the natural order (reproductive sex between men and women), and the laws of a “natural” language (the production of meaning according to a prescribed standard), are contrasted with the sodomitic, or hermaphroditic, order, in which sameness, and conscious play with what others consider linguistic defect (or “barbarolexis”), are the source of pleasure for those who choose to embrace it.

Nature’s, and the author’s, condemnation of such play is thrown into question by the many “tricks of the signifier” contained in the work, including the ambiguous status of classical poets, who are condemned by Nature’s words but constantly evoked both stylistically and by the framing structure of the poem - Nature seems remarkably well-versed in Roman poetry, and interacts with Roman

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The textual staging of the poem itself, its narrator asleep, but not dreaming, neither living nor dead, suggests that Nature and her revelations are yet another dream.

The most common approach to the text in modern literary scholarship, following Leupin’s interpretation, has been to demonstrate the ways in which these contradictions tear the text apart from the inside out, demolishing the meaning the author purports to present. Rollo, for example, sees Alan’s use of the very rhetorical and stylistic techniques Nature warns against in his depiction of sexual deviancy as serving to align the author with the “discursive hermaphrodite” who is seemingly the object of the text’s scorn. Jordan’s analysis of De planctu examines “gaps in the covering that is supposed to be the main moral teaching of the text” – in other words, he considers the text’s condemnation of sodomy as part of its integumentum. Nature’s inability to articulate a viable argument against male sodomy, as evidenced by the many contradictions embedded in her discourse, is intended to demonstrate a deeper truth: that only

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127 Ibid., 72

128 Leupin, Barbarolexis, 72-3; see also Jordan, Invention of Sodomy, 76-7.

129 Rollo, Kiss My Relics, 118

130 Jordan, Invention of Sodomy, 68-9.
Christian discourse can speak coherently about sexual sins.\textsuperscript{131} Jordan ultimately sees Alan’s work as a criticism of the use of pagan myth as part of the moral education of Christians, with sodomy as a mere case in point.\textsuperscript{132}

Jordan’s approach is only the most extreme example of a broader trend in the scholarship on \textit{De planctu} – although “no one disputes” that the main moral message of the text is a condemnation of same-sex copulation, no one is very interested in examining the history, and significance, of that fact in itself.\textsuperscript{133} A refusal to confront Alan’s focus on sex between men is fairly common – even Leupin deals mainly with the linguistic and semiotic implications of the work, and only tangentially with sexuality. This temptation to put language at the forefront reflects both current theoretical models and the tendency of this text to revel in its own dazzling wordplay. As Pittenger observes, “[t]urning sodomy into perversion, perversion into language abuse, and language abuse into poetry, makes it easy to shy away from a whole range of problems and concentrate instead on \textit{[De planctu]} as yet another reflexive text about language.”\textsuperscript{134}

\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., 87-8.
\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., 88.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., 68.
\textsuperscript{134} Elizabeth Pittenger, “Explicit Ink”, in \textit{Premodern Sexualities} ed. Louise Fradenburg and Carla Freccero (New York: Routledge, 1996), 224-5. Pittenger herself replaces the concept of writing with the physical process of writing, making a parallel, but familiar theoretical move by claiming that “the text, in representing scenes of writing, figures the very dynamics that produce it as an object.” (p. 224).
It may also be difficult for historians of sexuality (many of whom are, like myself, LGBTIQ-identified) to read language about homoeroticism which seems to express the hatred and fears that are still all too present in our own cultures. Turning these words inside out, or looking “beyond” them to a deeper meaning, can be comforting, if not easy. But the fact remains that medieval readers most likely did not read the text this way. As Häring observes, the French manuscripts and several others append the curse “Pereat sodomita prophanus” [death to the impious sodomite] to the text.\(^{135}\) As we have seen, the literal approach that was common in schools would most likely have focused on the stated *intentio* of the author; the text’s designation in 22 manuscripts as *enchiridion* (handbook), further suggests that its stated purpose was taken more seriously by medieval readers than by modern readers.\(^{136}\) Rather than brushing this purpose aside, I would like to look at the way Alan frames the problem of sexual deviance – not just as a “grammar” problem, but as a *learning* problem.

### 2.9 The grammar of a twelfth-century metaphor

Alan’s text demonstrates a uniquely twelfth-century formulation of the connections between grammar and sexuality which engages with concepts and practices of

\(^{135}\) Häring, “De planctu Naturae”, 802.

\(^{136}\) Pittenger, “Explicit Ink”, 223. I have not found any studies investigating early glosses or commentaries to this text. Most commentaries would likely date from the thirteenth century and beyond, but would contribute an important perspective on the enduring significance of twelfth-century concepts of sexuality and grammar.
schooling. While I do not disagree with the many fascinating implications of the connection between bodies, meaning and language as laid out by Leupin, Jordan, Rollo and others, there is one aspect of the functioning of the metaphor itself that bears further examination. The sustained presence of the classroom, of the processes of teaching and learning (not just that of the trivium), in De planctu has rarely been remarked upon. Grammar, as part of the trivium, is of course synonymous with formal schooling, but it is important to note that other metaphors involving the processes of textual creation (pens, writing, copying, etc) would also have been closely linked to schools in the medieval mind, since schools were vital to both the mechanical and cultural production of texts. Built into these metaphors is the idea that a faulty model, be it a teacher or a text, can result in a faulty student, or copy of the original. This defective chain of teaching and learning is a key component of the metaphor which drives Alan’s discussion of the parallel problems of linguistic and sexual deviance. Alan’s work also demonstrates a twelfth-century recognition that any “rules” of language or desire are fallible, because these behaviours are not natural or instinctually determined, but learned. Grammar, and human language in general, is normally classified in medieval sources as the opposite of natural processes. Human language,

Although it should be noted that the influence of the text itself (measured by frequency of quotation and manuscripts) and its use in the classroom was fairly limited prior to the fourteenth century - see notes 121 and 122 above.
after the fall of the tower of Babel, is based on the social consent of various groups of people and differs according to time and place. By aligning grammar with sexuality, Alan is suggesting that both are products of human social conditions, governed by cultural standards, and subject to local variation. The inconsistencies in the metaphor itself demonstrate a cultural anxiety about the instability that is common to both language and sexual behaviour.

Nature plays a major part in the defective chain of teaching and learning which makes sex between men and other sexual deviance possible, despite the fact that it is contrary to both God’s law and that of Nature. Although God’s power is absolute, his created universe is fundamentally conflicted, and humans’ ability to follow either reason or sensuality reflects this dis/order. The mixed nature of both the universe and its microcosm, human nature, are due to the fact that God deputized Nature to fashion them (DPN 6.3-4). Nature herself emphasizes the fact that she is a poor student of a brilliant master: “Summi Magistri me humilem profiteor esse discipulam” [I declare

138 See Augustine, De doctrina christiana 2.4.5, 2.24.37. Alan himself acknowledges that grammar in founded on human decisions; Ziolkowski, Grammar of Sex, 106-7.

139 Jordan, Invention of Sodomy, 79 makes a similar argument and provides references for concept of the conventionality of grammar in twelfth-century sources. However, his argument is that sex and grammar are aligned here precisely because their alignment does not make sense, as part of his broader argument about the failure of Nature/nature to adequately govern sexual behaviour.

140 For the “concors discordia” of the four elements and human temperaments, see DPN 6.6; for the opposition of sensuality and reason, see DPN 6.7.
that I am a lowly student of the highest master], *DPN* 6.14). Her work is “deficiens” compared to that of her master (*DPN* 6.14). Despite her role as God’s “vicaria” [substitute] (*DPN* 8.30 etc.), her initial job of forging copies of all living things, described in terms of the act of writing, had to be closely supervised: “meae actionis manum dextera supremae auctoritatis dirigeret, quia meae scripturae calamus exorbitatione subita deviaret nisi suprerni Dispensatoris digito regeretur” [the right hand of the supreme authority guided the hand of my action, because the pen of my writing would suddenly slip into deviance unless guided by the finger of the supreme manager] (*DPN* 8.30).

This image is clearly one which derives from the classroom; teachers might guide students’ pens in order to help them perfect their first letterforms on a wax tablet.141 Nature seems an especially bad student, though, if she requires such constant supervision even as she carries out important tasks. Nevertheless, she is soon able to appoint her own “subvicaria” [substitute substitute?], Venus, and become a teacher. Nature explains that Venus was put in charge of material procreation, but was given a “calamum praepotentem” [all-powerful pen] to ensure that all her inscriptions were done “iuxta meae orthographiae normulam” [according to the rule of my orthography] (*DPN* 10.2), otherwise Venus’ writing might stray, just as Nature’s had done. The rules

141 Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 1.27 mentions this method and improves upon it by having students trace their letterforms on a custom-made carved tablet so that mistakes are not possible.
of Nature’s orthography govern the variations of sexual activity, and Venus must learn which ones are acceptable:

...ut in suis connectionibus artis grammaticae constructiones canonicas observaret, suique artificii nobilitas nullius artis ignorantia suae ferret gloriae detrimentum, curialibus praeeptis sub magistrali disciplina eam velut discipulam instruendam docui quas artis grammaticae regulas in suarum constructionum unionibus artificiosis admitteret, quas velut extraordinarias, nullius figurae excusatione redemptas, excluderet. (DPN 10.3)

[...so that she would observe the canonical constructions of the art of grammar in her conjoinings, and so that there would be no detriment to the glory of her noble craft through ignorance of this art, I taught her, by means of elegant precepts, with magisterial rigour, like a student to be educated, which rules of the art of grammar she should adopt in the artful unions of her constructions, and which ones she should exclude as exceptions, redeemed by no excuse, not even as figures.]

Nature teaches Venus much more than just the *ars grammatica*, describing a full program which includes rhetoric and disputation (DPN 10.7-9). Despite these lessons, Venus becomes bored with her task, and begins to get creative – as Nature puts it, “iuvenari”[to act childishly, or impetuously] (DPN 10.10). She begins misusing her skills:

gramaticis constructionibus destruens, dialecticis conversionibus invertens, rethoricis coloribus decolorans suam artem in figuram, figuramque in vitium transferebat. (DPN 10.12)

[with destructive grammatical constructions, perverse dialectical conversions, discoloured rhetorical colours, she turned her art into a figure, and that figure into a vice].
Venus then begins to teach this distorted “grammar” in her own schools, causing humans to practice many perverse pairings as described throughout *De planctu*. The development of human sexuality, according to Alan, resembles a game of broken telephone in which Nature, having learned badly from God, teaches Venus inadequately (despite Nature’s protests to the contrary), allowing Venus to perpetuate even more perverse instruction.

These images demonstrate cultural anxieties about the unreliable nature of teaching, but they also raise questions about the productive power of mis-learned, or perverse, grammatical and sexual practices. Falsigraphy, the crime committed by Venus and many others over the course of *De planctu*, is not the opposite of meaningful writing, but a kind of queer writing through which multiple non-standard meanings are produced. Although the sodomite is barren in terms of sexual reproduction, the sodomitical pen produces an excess of meaning.¹⁴² When students leave the school – be it the cathedral school, or that of Venus - they can reconfigure the rules.

This idea is especially relevant with respect to Alan’s discussion of *vitium*. This term can refer to a defect in writing or to a variety of sins, some of them sexual, and Alan exploits

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this ambiguity in many iterations.\textsuperscript{143} Most notable is his description of the grammatical and sexual crimes of the sodomite, at the very beginning of \textit{De planctu Naturae}:

\begin{quote}
\begin{verbatim}
Activi generis sexu se turpiter horret
sic in passivum degenerare genus.
Femina vir factus sexus denigrat honorem,
    Ars magicae Veneris hermafroditat eum.
Praedicat et subicit, fit duplex terminus idem,
    grammaticae leges ampliat ille nimis.
Se negat esse virum, Naturae factus in arte
    barbarus. Ars illi non placet, immo tropus.
Non tamen ista tropus poterit translatio dici;
    in vitium melius ista figura cadit.
\end{verbatim}
\end{quote}

\textit{(DPN 1.15-24)}

[The active sex is horrified that it has shamefully degenerated into the passive sex. A man made woman defames the dignity of his sex; the art of the magical Venus makes him a hermaphrodite. He is both predicate and subject, the same word has two endings, he expands the laws of grammar too far. He denies that he is a man, because he has become a barbarian in the grammar of Nature. The art [of grammar] does not please him, only troping. But a transformation of this kind cannot be called a trope; this figure is better classed as a defect.]

The sodomite, characterised as a hermaphrodite because of his confused performance of appropriately gendered sexual roles, is able to misuse the laws of grammar for his own pleasure. The sodomite believes that he is troping, or modifying linguistic/sexual practices in an acceptable way, but Nature insists that he is committing a literary/sexual barbarism. The difference between \textit{vitium} and \textit{tropus}, while very important to medieval writers of \textit{artes poeticae} and \textit{artes dictandi}, is not as clear as

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{143} Ziolkowski, \textit{Grammar of Sex}, 41
\end{footnotes}
Nature’s statement suggests. Donatus gives the classic definition “tropus est dictio translata a propria significatione ad non propriam similitudinem ornatus necessitatisve causa” [a trope is a word changed from its proper meaning to a similar one that is not its own, as an ornament or due to [presumably metrical?] necessity].\textsuperscript{144} This definition is widely quoted and adapted in medieval sources from Isidore of Seville, to Hugh of St Victor, to Alan of Lille himself. Distinguishing a trope from a vice seems to be largely a matter of opinion, though, and as Leupin remarks, the reader can interpret any \textit{vitium}/\textit{tropus} as belonging to poetic license, so that “those \textit{vitia} that condemn the mediocre poet are interpreted merely as so many signs of the master’s genius”.\textsuperscript{145}

In other words, \textit{tropus} is an acceptable deviation from the norm, while \textit{vitium} is an unacceptable one. The sodomite considers his adaptation of sexual “grammar” an acceptable deviation, and Nature attempts to correct him. Interestingly, Alan does not identify a group of people who are more prone to mislearning the rules, or making this kind of mistake – in his “universalizing” view, sodomy can be any man’s problem.\textsuperscript{146} The fact that the sodomite is able to stretch, or amplify (\textit{ampliat}) grammar’s laws in the

\textsuperscript{144} Donatus \textit{Ars grammatica} 3.6. as quoted by Ziolkowski, \textit{Grammar of Sex}, 16 n5. Ziolkowski also provides a number of instances of the many quotations of this definition throughout the Middle Ages.

\textsuperscript{145} Leupin, \textit{Barbarolexis}, 67. In fact, many of the examples of literary vices given by Donatus and Isidore come from \textit{auctores} like Virgil or Ovid.

\textsuperscript{146} Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, \textit{The Epistemology of the Closet}, rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 1, 85-6
first place suggests that these laws have a limited force. Alan’s wording further suggests that some creative adaptation or stretching of sexual/grammatical rules is acceptable: the sodomite simply pushes too far (nimis). In the end, the reader and writer (or sexual actors) must determine amongst themselves the kind of deviance that is acceptable, making even the art of grammar a flexible art, subject to human will.

While many scholars have focused on the queer hermeneutic and sexual implications of this lack of a strict criterion for distinguishing vitium and tropus, few have related it directly to the classroom where this distinction is first introduced. The ambiguities inherent in distinctions of literary and sexual taste suggest that cultural forces play an important role in identifying which combinations, within the shifting and multiple possibilities that fall within the “rules” of sex/grammar, are praiseworthy and socially useful. Nature’s “rules”, in fact, seem not to be rules at all, since they are very easily broken, as Nature herself demonstrates over the course of Alan’s text. In order for grammar to serve as an appropriate metaphor for sexuality, sexuality must be viewed in the same terms as grammar: as a rule-based system which is not natural or instinctually determined, but learned. Readers and sexual actors must be taught which horizons of meaning and action to focus on. In my analysis, Nature’s “failure” to adequately explain or enforce her grammatical/sexual rules over the course of De planctu is less important than the fact that the metaphor itself is structured around teaching and learning.
2.10 Conclusion

This chapter has traced some of the ways in which twelfth-century education incorporated sexuality into an ethical reading curriculum. The medieval emphasis on the *auctores* as “ethical” highlights the fact that human behaviour was thought to be the main subject matter of these texts, and an area of special expertise of the authors themselves. As I have shown, sexuality is often identified as a subset of the social behaviours covered by ethics, and comes into the classroom not only incidentally, as connected to readings whose purpose is strictly grammatical, but as a set of behaviours which is variously associated with classroom practice, methods of teaching, and rules. In the hands of the *magister amoris*, love and sex become the subject of formal rules, and students are provided with social scripts and performances in the form of *praecepta*. Alan of Lille, on the other hand, demonstrates that such regulatory frameworks and associated performances conceal the extent to which individual actors can stretch the rules and change the parameters of meaning, be it sexually or linguistically. These two perspectives in fact stem from the same anxiety about male sexual acts as components of the performance of gender.

Alan’s emphasis on the distinction between *vitium* and *tropus* highlights the importance of teaching students to make nuanced judgments of stylistic and sexual “taste”. The next chapter will demonstrate that adolescent boys were seen as especially vulnerable to mistakes in judgment which impacted their gender identity and choice of sexual acts,
simultaneously reinforcing the need for education in sexual conduct and demonstrating a social latitude available to adolescent boys which was not accorded to adult men.
Chapter 3
Adolescent readers, adolescent heroes: reading beyond the rules

The previous chapter outlined a strain of medieval discourse related to the “ethical reading” of school texts which constructs sexuality as a process closely associated with learning. While Ovid’s *Ars amatoria* and *Remedia amoris*, and their medieval commentaries, lay out an ordered cycle of sexual behaviour based on neat *praeccepta*, Alan of Lille describes a messier process of faulty teaching and learning which emphasizes the negative consequences of ignoring or mislearning sexual rules of conduct. Although both texts connect formal schooling with the learning of ethical precepts, Alan’s more complex metaphor demonstrates the slippage possible within both sexuality and grammar: alternative grammars and sexualities do not cease to produce meaning, or to function socially, but are productive of strains of culture parallel to the norm.

These concerns were especially pressing for teachers of adolescent students. As we will see below, male adolescence was viewed as a formative period during which young men would begin to develop the ability to discern ethical nuances and to ready themselves for their roles as adults. Teachers were well aware of the formative power of schooling, and adolescent boys, whose sexual maturity was a subject for serious concern as future monks or clerics, needed careful instruction.
As Woods has observed, many texts that were used in medieval classrooms seem to be specifically geared to adolescent readers. In both Roman and medieval European culture *adolescentia* was associated with emotional turmoil, vigorous strength, and lust. The school texts and commentaries which deal with adolescent characters provide information about the perceived characteristics of adolescent boys, including their social status, gender roles, and sexuality, as described by ancient authors and interpreted by medieval teachers. But the readers of these texts were also adolescent (or slightly preadolescent) boys, which makes the situation slightly more complicated: are these descriptions and interpretations meant to be *prescriptive*, outlining a model of behaviour for the reader, or simply *descriptive* of past or present adolescent behaviours? These questions are especially important because several school texts depict adolescent sexual behaviour as a socially disruptive force. Depictions of such unruly adolescent behaviour in the *auctores* complicate the structured picture of sexuality’s association with rules and formal education presented in Chapter 2. Even if texts with adolescent protagonists stirred up emotions in their readers, offered them a fantasy of adolescence which they themselves could not act out, or demonstrated the dangers inherent in adolescent thinking, the depictions of unstable adolescent gender and sexuality in school texts still subtly reinforce the importance of learned performance, strengthening

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the link between sexuality and schooling. While the Achilleid and Eunuchus demonstrate the gender-liminality of adolescent boys in terms of their ability to “pass” as women, Juvenal’s satires demonstrate a variety of dangers associated with the social and sexual liminality of adolescent boys. Running through all these texts and their commentaries is a further strain of discourse linking sexuality and learning, this time focusing on the fact that deviant or socially disruptive sexualities and gender performances can be learned through both formal and informal teaching. This chapter will explore the medieval and Roman notions of adolescence and the ways in which they informed these readings of sexuality beyond the rules.

3.1 Defining medieval adolescence

Nihil incertius quam vita adolescentium

[Nothing is more unsteady than the life of an adolescent]

- Gratian, Decretum C. 12 q.1 c.1

Over the past forty years, scholars of social history have worked to reexamine concepts of medieval childhood (and, to a much lesser extent, adolescence), often motivated by Philippe Ariès’ assertion that key features of these stages of life are products of later historical eras, and are anachronistic when applied to medieval youths.² Ariès argues that medieval youths were immersed in adult society from an early age, and worked

alongside adults in many social settings, performing tasks similar to those of adults. Children are often depicted as tiny adults in medieval art, wearing adult clothing, and are not differentiated in terms of anything but their size. These observations led Ariès to theorize that children are not significantly differentiated from adults in terms of medieval social or cultural markers. An important aspect of his analysis is his identification of a trend, as the medieval gives way to the early modern period, towards the firm establishment of the nuclear family, which removes children from the outside world of adults and places them in a family home increasingly organized around their own needs. The development of universal, and hierarchical, systems of formal education geared specifically towards children of distinct ages (during the early modern and modern era) sets children even further apart from the social world of adults. These social developments help to create the experience of childhood that exists in today’s Western European cultures.³

Today, Ariès’ work is mostly used as a straw man against which to compare medievalists’ increasingly detailed notion of the cultural history of medieval childhood.

³ As Ariès explains in his preface to the second edition of L’enfant et la vie familiale, he had two arguments in mind which probably should not have been combined: on one hand, he wanted to account for “la difficulté, voire la répugnance, des jeunes à passer à l’état adulte” in the modern era, which he attributes to youths’ prolonged process of formal education, increasingly long stay in the family home and to the emotional and economic bonds between bourgeois parents and children which are the results of these factors; his second argument concerned the fact that the medieval period lacked a “sentiment de l’enfance” (see Ariès, L’enfant et la vie familiale, iv-vi).
Many modern studies of medieval childhood summarize Ariès’ arguments by flatly stating that Ariès denied the existence of childhood prior to the seventeenth century. Although this is a rather simplistic interpretation of Ariès’ work, this idea has challenged medievalists to demonstrate the ways in which childhood is socially constructed, not just in the present day, but within various medieval social classes and distinct cultures.

The reason I have lingered on this (admittedly rather outdated) debate is that although Ariès included what today would be termed adolescents (“jeunes”) in his outline of the social development of childhood, there has not been a corresponding backlash of research into the social construction of medieval adolescence. Adolescence has not been thoroughly deconstructed; it still seems to refer so specifically to a modern nexus of cultural and scientific notions that historians feel they must carefully parse their use.

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4 Surveys of the history of childhood, such as Shulamith Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London: Routledge, 1990) or Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Children* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001) include some information about adolescents but tend to focus on younger children. Works on medieval adolescents are relatively few - this is especially true of the twelfth-century (male, clerical) adolescents who are the subject of this dissertation. Later periods (especially after the thirteenth century) are slightly better studied, including research on adolescent apprentices (see Barbara Hanawalt, *Growing up in Medieval London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) and The Ties that Bound (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), among her many other publications), youth confraternities (for example, Natalie Zemon Davis’ pioneering article “The Reasons of Misrule: Youth Groups and Charivaris in Sixteenth-century France” *Past and Present* 50: 1 (1971), 41-75; work on individual confraternities in various cities, such as Konrad Eisenbichler, The Boys of the Archangel Raphael: a Youth Confraternity in Florence, 1411-1785 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998) is important for discussions of urban youth culture but is still not widespread and university students (Ruth Mazo Karras, From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003); some institutional histories of medieval schools and universities also include some information about students’ status as adolescents, see the work of Jacques Verger, especially Culture, enseignement et société en Occident aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1999) and (with Pierre Riché) Des nains sur des épaules de géants: maîtres et élèves au Moyen Age (Paris: Tallandier, 2006), but these are still primarily about the institutions themselves).
of the term to refer youths of the premodern period. Yet many medieval accounts of the stages of human life, especially those from the twelfth century, identify *adolescentia* as a distinct stage of life, between childhood and maturity, which implies that calling a youth *adolescens* had a fairly specific meaning.

Modern-day historians, on the other hand, have become entangled in the variety of Latin terms used to describe young people; some, like *infans*, are exclusively for young children, while others, like *puer* or *iuvenis*, can cover a range of ages up to and including youths who would be considered adolescents today. This should not be so great a surprise, since within modern cultures young people might also be referred to differently depending on the social context in which they find themselves: a parent might tell a teenager who wants to travel abroad alone that they cannot, since they are still a child, while in the modern judicial system, adolescents can be treated either as children or adults, depending on the jurisdiction and crime; young people in high school must attend classes by law, just like children, but can start university as young as

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5 See Konrad Eisenbichler’s introduction to *The Premodern Teenager*, ed. Konrad Eisenbichler (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies Publications, 2002) and Isabelle Cochelin’s explanation of her use of terms such as “teenager”, “adolescentia” and “adolescence” in her article “Adolescence Uncloistered (Cluny, early twelfth century)”, in *Medieval Life Cycles*, ed. Isabelle Cochelin and Karen Smyth (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 151.

6 See the excellent compilation of lists of life stages by authors writing prior to the thirteenth century (the majority are from the twelfth century) in the introduction to *Medieval Life Cycles*, 18-42.

sixteen or seventeen and attend as adults. Both modern and medieval conceptions of adolescence underline the fact that the adolescent is in the midst of a physical and mental transition from childhood to adulthood, and combines the qualities of both stages.⁸

It is this “betweenness” that makes adolescence so difficult to define. This aspect of adolescence is sometimes referred to as liminality, a term whose meaning has accrued its own sense of ambiguity over the past forty years. A “liminal state”, as described by van Gennep and refined by Turner, initially referred to a process during rites de passage in which the participant in these rites “passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state.”⁹ This liminal subject enters a heavily marked process of social refashioning during the ritual, which may involve physical segregation from the community and the imparting of sacred knowledge.¹⁰ According to Turner, the participants in these rituals develop “communitas”, a temporary set of social relationships lacking the (class-, age-, gender-based) distinctions and structures which mark daily life in a given culture.¹¹ As I discussed in Chapter 1, this could be true

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⁸ See Agata Sobczyk, L’érotisme des adolescents dans la littérature française du moyen âge (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), viii.
¹⁰ Ibid., 103.
¹¹ Ibid., 126-7.
for the medieval adolescent schoolboy, who enjoys a relative freedom of choice and movement unique to his time of life, is immersed in a homosocial school environment distinct from other social spaces, and is engaged in learning a specialized set of skills which, while not secret in a ritual sense, are not widely available outside of this specialized environment (including an understanding of a “sacred” language, Latin). Turner’s description of such states, however, is linked to well-defined ritual spaces and actions that do not have a parallel in medieval schooling, and it is unclear to me whether liminality, in this narrow anthropological sense, can be extended over a long period of time such as the duration of a medieval boy’s schooling (a period of many years, with or without university, and subject to many cultural variables). Thus, even if the medieval adolescent schoolboy seems to fit Turner’s description of a “liminal entity” who is “neither here nor there”, “betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremonial”, the lack of a stable ritual cause of this liminality means that if we use the term “liminal” to describe a schoolboy’s adolescence we must use it in its less technical definition, as a hybrid state, a transitional combination of the qualities of childhood and adulthood.12

12 Ibid., 95; Turner himself points out that medieval monasticism “institutionalizes” many of the transitional qualities of the liminal state, making them permanent rather than temporary, but does not elaborate on the implications of such a fundamental shift (see The Ritual Process, 106-8).
The details around this liminal stage of life are the subject of great variation, both in the primary Latin sources and in the scholarly literature that frames them. Formal definitions of medieval *adolescentia* tend to occur over the course of descriptions of the “ages of man”, a body of literature which has its own distinct history and structure.\(^{13}\)

These texts can provide a starting point for an investigation of the range of qualities associated with the term *adolescentia*, if not its exact cultural context.\(^{14}\) Medieval accounts of life stages identify a wide range of ages for male *adolescentia* (*adulescentia* in classical Latin), generally beginning around age fourteen and extending anywhere from the mid-twenties to the mid thirties, or even older.\(^ {15}\) One classic description is that of Isidore of Seville, who names the life stages *infantia* (infancy), *pueritia* (childhood), *adolescentia* (adolescence), *iuventus* (youth), *gravitas* (maturity) and *senectus* (old age) (*Etym* 11.2.1-7). Isidore specifies that *adolescentia* is correlated with the ability to procreate, and extends to age twenty-eight, while *iuventus* extends to age fifty. The boundary between *adolescentia* and *iuventus* is extremely variable in medieval sources,

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\(^{13}\) J. A. Burrow, *The Ages of Man: a Study in Medieval Writing and Thought* (London: Clarendon Press, 1986). Burrow focuses primarily on material from England, but includes many other related traditions, including Latin, Greek, Arabic, and French, providing a good overview of the subject.

\(^{14}\) Sobczyk, *L’érotisme des adolescents*, 1-2, points out that the “âges de la vie” tradition is highly idealized and theoretical.

\(^{15}\) An extreme example is the forty-year old William Marshall; Kathleen G. Cushing, “*Pueri, Iuvenes* and *Viri*: Age and Utility in the Gregorian Reform”, *Catholic Historical Review* 94 (2008): 439. For the range of ages, see the list in *Medieval Life Cycles* (see n. 7 above).
and seems to be linked to the social obligations of each age according to social class. Even *puer* has a certain elasticity of meaning, allowing it to refer to young unmarried men of any age, depending on the context.

Barbara Hanawalt, drawing on the work of van Gennep, suggests that this ambiguity arises from the fact that adolescence is comprised of two intertwined notions: physical adolescence (the onset of puberty and its visible bodily signs) and the cultural rituals surrounding it. In other words, the pubertal changes which result in physical maturity and the cultural processes which recognize social maturity follow slightly different timelines. This helps to explain the variation in ages associated with the early stages of *adolescentia*: the development of secondary sex characteristics begins at different ages depending on the individual, and the full range of changes happens gradually, over a period of time ranging throughout the teens. Isidore addresses this variability when he discusses the appearance of pubic hair and its relationship to the word “puberty”:

*Puberes a pube, id est a pudenda corporis, nuncupati, quod haec loca tunc primum lanuginem ducunt. Quidam autem ex annis pubertatem existimant, id est eum puberem esse qui quattuordecim annos expleverit, quamvis tardissime pubescat: certissimum*

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17 Duby, “Les ‘jeunes’”, 1147; Cushing, “Age and utility”, discusses the developmental and spiritual connotations of the use of *puer* in monastic sources. See also Isidore of Seville, *Etym* 11.2.11, in which he explores various implications of the word, as discussed below.

autem puberem esse qui et ex habitu corporis pubertatem ostendit et generare iam possit. (Etym 11.2.13) 19

[Puberes (pubescent boy) derives from pube, that is the shameful parts of the body, because these places first grow hair at that time of life. Some people determine puberty according to age, so that a boy who has reached the age of fourteen is said to be pubescent, even if he physically matures very late: but most certainly a boy who both exhibits the bodily signs of puberty and can already procreate is pubescent.]

In the late teens and beyond, culture takes over the definition of adolescence and youth in physically adult men whose social roles set them apart from those who are considered legitimate adults. Duby highlights this distinction when discussing the lives of young knights during the twelfth century, positing that iuventus had a special meaning for this group of men during what could be a long gap between their adoubement and the assumption of fully adult responsibilities, including marriage and the official duties of a lord.20 Cushing, in an ecclesiastical context, shows that behaviour, rather than numerical age, was highlighted by eleventh-century reformers in order to communicate their vision of social order; the terms used to describe young men are strategically deployed to demonstrate the opinion of religious authorities on their suitability for offices such as king, bishop and pope.21 Between childhood and youth,

19 I have translated the Latin as referring only to male adolescents because of the age Isidore specifies; female puberty and maturity were usually thought to begin earlier. See Shulamith Shahar, Childhood in the Middle Ages (London: Routledge, 1990), 27-31.


and youth and adulthood, lay a number of “shadowy” stages subject to cultural adaptation.22

This variation in the medieval accounts of adolescence has resulted in two opposing scholarly models. From Hanawalt’s perspective, and for others who primarily study lay or noble youth, it is easier to pinpoint the end of adolescence than the beginning, because it is marked by rituals such as marriage or the formal end of apprenticeship.23 Scholars working with monastic or ecclesiastical sources, such as Cushing or Cochelin, say the exact opposite, that only the beginning of adolescence can be firmly established.24 Specific recommendations are made in many monastic texts to protect and educate adolescentes, and the lower age limit found in Isidore and many other medieval sources (age fourteen) more or less coincides with the age at which an oblate would take up the monk’s full profession.25 On the other hand, “spiritual childhood” can last a very long time, and spiritual maturity, as the culmination of the process of education and self-examination encouraged for both monks and priests, could take a lifetime to achieve.26 As Isidore explains in the course of his discussion of the meaning of puer, an adult can

22 Ibid., 438.
26 See Cushing’s discussion, “Age and Utility”, 441-4.
be referred to as *puer*, with positive connotations, to refer to his obedience and purity of faith (“pro obsequio et fidei puritate”), an idea which clearly resonated with many monks and clerics. 27 This difference in the perceived “liminality” of adolescence, as more heavily set apart from adulthood or from childhood, has allowed scholars in their respective fields to outline important differences in the cultural rituals which define the “social age” of young men of various social groups. As Shahar points out, there was no uniform age of majority which defined the fully adult male, since “[t]he minimum age for marriage, the ages at which a man could do as he chose with his inheritance, sue, or give evidence in civil or criminal cases [...], take up ecclesiastical posts, become a monk, or serve in a lay public position” were all different. 28 Thus adolescence, as a universal phenomenon, did not exist, but had specific meanings in each social environment. This field will benefit significantly if future studies of the historical notions of childhood, and especially of adolescence, take into account more explicitly the ways in which life stages, social class and gender are intertwined.

For students in twelfth-century schools, the meaning of *adolescentia* was not only liminal in the sense sketched out above, straddling childhood and adulthood, and shadowy in

27 *Etym.* 11.2.11. Isidore explains that *puer* has three meanings: it can refer to a newborn child (as a basic synonym for *infans*), an older child (for example, an eight- or ten-year old), or to a pious adult, like Jeremiah, whom God addresses as *puer* despite his advanced age. See also Shahar’s discussion of the positive connotations of childhood in medieval cultures, *Childhood*, 17-19.

its boundaries, but it was also liminal in relation to competing cultural models. As I outlined in Chapter 1, twelfth-century clerics were confronted with a renewed set of tensions between the broad cultural definition of masculinity, which involved phallic dominance over women and demonstrations of physical strength, especially in warfare, and marked social distinctions between clerical and lay masculinity, which meant that clerics were unable to display their masculinity as effectively as laymen. While, in a general way, clerics could appropriate metaphors of warfare to frame their way of life as parallel to that of other men (by calling themselves “soldiers of Christ”, comparing themselves to knights and other soldiers), the reformed clerical stance towards sexual acts and desires made it more difficult to effect a similar transformation. Adolescent boys training to be clerics, sometimes associated with excessive lust in contemporary sources, were not supposed to associate sexual maturity with their ability to become husbands or fathers, but had to begin to formulate a celibate masculinity. At the same time, as schoolboys, they were immersed in the literature of the auctores, which depicted adolescent lust and unruly behaviour with a celebratory relish. Descriptions of adolescence in pedagogical material from twelfth-century schools present a blend of Roman and medieval perspectives, one which links adolescence, irrationality, and sexual awakening. If, as Desmond has noted, the use of the Ars amatoria as a school text implies that “the onset of amor must be attended by instruction”29, other auctores texts

29 Marilynn Desmond, “Venus’ clerk: Ovid’s amatory poetry in the Middle Ages” in A Handbook to the
read alongside it, which depict the sexuality and gendered behaviour of adolescents, demonstrate *why* this instruction is needed, and explore both the possibilities and dangers of the adolescent’s liminal state.

3.2 From Roman to medieval adolescence: the slippery age

Via lata gradior more iuventutis,  
inplico me viciis immemor virtutis,  
voluptatis avidus magis quam salutis,  
mortuus in anima curam gero cutis.

[I walk a broad path, as is customary for the young,  
I get myself wrapped up in vice, forgetful of virtue,  
more eager for pleasure than for salvation,  
although my soul is dead, I take good care of my body]

- Archpoet, “Confession”

It is important to note the complex history shared by Roman and medieval European concepts of male adolescence. These cultures shared many medical notions about puberty, transmitted through Galenic and Hippocratic medical traditions, but also came

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30 Archpoet, *Die Gedichte des Archipoeta,* ed. Heinrich Watenphul and Heinrich Krefeld (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1958), 73. (Although the editors simply number it X, the poem is known as the “Confession”).
increasingly to share cultural depictions of adolescent boys, partly through the widespread reading of the classical *auctores*.\(^{31}\)

One medical schema common to classical, late antique and medieval descriptions of age associates the seasons, humours, elements and basic properties (hot/cold/wet/dry) with four stages of life.\(^{32}\) Adolescence or youth, the second stage of life, is hot and dry, and is associated with summer, fire and red choler (a variation of yellow bile).\(^{33}\) This intense heat accounts for the unreliable behaviour of adolescents, and is associated with lust in both medieval and Roman cultures.\(^{34}\) Heat was an important element of male sexual potency, because it was believed to be the force which allowed blood to be concocted into its purest form, semen.\(^{35}\) The ability to produce semen, and thus to engender offspring, was an important sign of the sexual maturity which marked adolescence in Greco-Roman and medieval cultures. In the Roman context, phallic dominance was a key feature of masculinity, and sexual maturity in adolescent boys


\(^{32}\) Burrow, *Ages of Man*, 12-15, refers to this schema as the “physical and physiological fours”.

\(^{33}\) Ibid., 12


was the cause for public celebration. In Christian medieval cultures, sexual maturity in both men and women was regarded with more suspicion, because sexual desire and sexual reproduction were closely associated with the original sin of Adam and Eve.

Augustine, standing between these two cultures, gives a particularly revealing account of his parents’ respective reactions to his burgeoning sexual maturity at age sixteen (Confessions 2.3.6):

...me ille pater in balneis vidit pubescentem et inquieta indutum adulescentia, quasi iam ex hoc in nepotes gestiret, gaudens matri indicavit ...

[...when, at the baths, my father saw that I was pubescent and showing signs of youthful stirrings, he was thrilled, as if he could now expect grandchildren to appear, and told my mother...]

...illa exilivit pia trepidatione ac tremore et, quamvis mihi nondum fidelis, timuit tamen vias distortas in quibus ambulant qui ponunt ad te tergum et non faciem.

[but she experienced pious misgivings, and shuddered - she feared (although I was not yet among the faithful) that I might wander along] the roads walked by those who turn their backs to God and do not show Him their faces.]

Augustine explains that Monica’s reaction is due to her devotion to the Christian faith, while Patricius has only recently become a catechumen (a convert who is not yet prepared to be baptised). Patricius proudly sees his son’s pubescence as the first step towards becoming a Roman citizen and paterfamilias, while Monica identifies puberty as

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37 The context heavily suggests that the “inquieta adulescentia” is an erection; Augustine is playing with notions of being clothed (with lust) and unclothed (at the baths).
the beginning of a dangerous time in her son’s life, during which he will be prone to sexual sins (and Augustine demonstrates in the early books of the *Confessions* just how well-founded his mother’s fears were, as well as providing a model of lustful adolescence for generations of medieval readers).

Both of these perspectives stem from Roman understandings of male adolescence that will persist in various forms throughout the Middle Ages. The association of puberty with the sexual body and its desires has a different cultural meaning for Romans than for medieval Christians, but depictions of sexually-charged adolescents abound in both cultures. While there was a great deal of social concern over the appropriate expression and control of adolescent lust, sexual desire itself was seen as normal and acceptable in medieval cultures, especially for noble youths. The medieval definition of lay masculinity was linked to phallic potency, ultimately a symbol of the ability to produce sons. Thus, an adolescent’s desire for sex could have positive connotations as a sign of his future role as the head of a household; on the other hand, adolescent chastity in secular circles was thought to be relatively rare, and was considered either miraculous or a sign of sexual impotence.\(^38\) Certainly the adolescent chastity of many young male

\(^{38}\) Stoertz, “Sex and the medieval adolescent”, 233-4. William the Conqueror’s adolescent chastity was seen a sign of impotence, while Malcolm, the king of Scotland, was seen as miraculous for his youthful chastity.
martyrs and saints would not have been so remarkable, or commented upon so often, had it not been perceived as a miraculous deviation from the norm.

Male adolescence is also associated with new mental capacities, and the budding rationality of adolescent boys is a cause for concern in both medieval and Roman cultures. The intense heat arising in these young male bodies results in uncontrollable physical desires, and their developing-but-unstable rationality is responsible for poor decision-making. Variations on the expression “lubrica aetas” (the slippery age) abound in sources from Cicero (who talks about the “lubricas vias”, or slippery paths, that lie open to adolescents) to Jerome to Vincent of Beauvais.39 This leads many late antique and medieval writers to identify adolescence as a time when teaching and supervision are especially important, and especially difficult – as Horace remarks in his *Ars poetica* (163-5), a popular medieval school text, an adolescent is

...cereus in uitium flecti, monitoribus asper,
utilium tardus prouisor, prodigus aeris,
sublimis cupidusque et amata relinquere pernix

[...malleable towards sin, like wax, hard on his teachers, slow in practical matters, lavish in spending, eager, passionate, and flighty in his affections]

Medieval sources, especially monastic ones, show that adolescents were often subject to special supervision due to their age. As Cochelin has demonstrated, Cluniacs took special care to provide extra supervision and support to adolescent monks, including constant one-on-one chaperoning by an adult and limited contact with younger children. These measures were intended to ensure that the “sodomitic danger” (any sexual contact between adolescents and adults, or adolescents and younger children) was effectively curtailed. Gratian includes similar recommendations for adolescent clerics-in-training at C. 12 q. 1 c.1, including the reminder “Omnis etas ab adolescentia in malum prona est. Nichil incertius quam uita adolescentium” [Every age from adolescence onward is susceptible to evil. Nothing is more uncertain than the life of adolescents].

The instruction and supervision accompanying the physical and mental changes of adolescence are especially important in a Christian context, because the safety of the student’s soul is at stake. Augustine explains that youths can commit sexual sins from age fourteen, while Jerome explains that the interior homo, an inner self which is


contrasted with the physical body, arises at age fourteen.\textsuperscript{43} Perhaps most evocative of the early Christian perspective is Tertullian, who describes the awakening of lust in adolescents of about fourteen as akin to the fall of Adam and Eve: suddenly aware of their lust, adolescents must leave behind the paradise of their innocence and spend the rest of their lives in shame.\textsuperscript{44}

This image is taken up by Peter the Chanter in his glosses to Genesis. He explains that the eyes of younger children are closed to lust, just like Adam and Eve before the fall, and that they can see naked bodies with no physical or mental reactions, but that once children reach adolescence, “rivuli aperti sunt” [tiny floodgates open up] and their bodies begin to be moved by lust.\textsuperscript{45} Many other twelfth-century sources express anxiety about the burgeoning sexuality of adolescent monks and clerics, perhaps partly as a result of increasing concerns about clerical and monastic chastity in reformed church institutions.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{43} Eyben, \textit{Restless Youth}, 11-12. This frequently-quoted passage from Augustine’s \textit{De Genesi ad litteram} specifies that some sins can be committed by younger children, but that sexual sins can only properly be spoken of for children above the age of fourteen.

\textsuperscript{44} Tertullian, \textit{De anima} 38.1-2.

\textsuperscript{45} John W. Baldwin, \textit{The Language of Sex: Five Voices from Northern France around 1200} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, 88n3. Baldwin provides the Latin lemmata and glosses as transcribed from Paris Arsenal 44 10B, 11B and London British Library Roy. C8, fol. 6vB, 7rA, 7rB.

\textsuperscript{46} Stoertz has suggested that these concerns became much more prominent in monastic rules during the eleventh and twelfth centuries than in previous eras. See Fiona Harris Stoertz, “Adolescence and
Teachers were well aware that adolescent students faced special physical and mental distractions due to their age. Lanfranc wrote in 1127 that his adolescent nephew needed special attention because a young man of his age “per temptatorium spirituum suggestiones intrisecus laniatur, multis diversisque carnis titillationibus intus et exterius cruciatur”[is inwardly torn by the harmful suggestions of people who tempt souls, and is tortured both inwardly and outwardly by many and various stirrings of the flesh].\footnote{Stoertz, “Sex and the Medieval Adolescent”, 230.}

In the mid-thirteenth century, Vincent of Beauvais compiles a wide range of quotations from previous centuries which demonstrate the challenges faced by adolescent students, including lust, wavering rationality, and “inquietudinem corporis et curiositatem oculorum” [restless bodies and roving eyes].\footnote{Vincent of Beauvais, De eruditione, 20. See also Chapter 35 “De regimine vel disciplina adolescencie” and Chapter 36 “De moribus bonis formandis in adolescente” (pp 134-146). Vincent quotes biblical sources as well as classical and medieval authors, including a number of the sources discussed in Eyben’s book.} As we have seen, this led some teachers, like Conrad of Hirsau, to limit their students’ reading materials in order to avoid stirring up lust.

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\footnote{Stoertz, “Sex and the Medieval Adolescent”, 230.}
3.3 Reading the slippery age: adolescent sex in the schoolroom

These discourses around adolescence had special implications for educators, whose task was to guide adolescent boys safely through “the slippery age” into adulthood. The danger of uncontrollable lust combined with the propensity of adolescents to make rash decisions meant that adolescents required careful teaching and supervision. The clerical and monastic relationship to the sexual body was often framed as an internal “war” between rationality and the body in its fallen condition, a condition characterized by lust. In order to succeed as religious men, adolescent clerics needed to experience lust, recognize its symptoms, and then master it through work, prayer and self-monitoring techniques. Cassian (c. 360-435), whose work would influence generations of monastic rules, explains that an important sign that a monk has achieved true chastity is that he is able to distance himself from any sexual topics he may encounter in his daily reading:

...cum memoriam generationis humanae vel tractatus ratio vel necessitas lectionis ingesserit, subtilissimus mentem voluptariae actionis perstringat adsensus, sed velut opus quoddam simplex ac ministerium humano generi necessario contributum tranquillo ac puro cordis contemplatur intuitu nihilque amplius de eius recordatione concipiat, quam si operationem laterum vel cuiuslibet alterius officinae mente pertractet.

[...when the subject of a text or the logical consequence of a reading evokes the thought of human procreation, he pulls his mind back from the slightest thought of the pleasure of the sexual act, but instead, with a placid and pure heart, thinks of it as a simple task and a duty necessary for human procreation, and calls up nothing more in his memory]
at this thought than if he were thinking about the making of bricks or some other trade].

This attitude may help to explain the presence of texts portraying adolescent desire, and sexual matters in general, in both monastic and cathedral school classrooms. Such texts gave students the opportunity to practice this mental distancing, perhaps aided by the pretense that the texts themselves were merely grammatical reading exercises.

At the same time, texts like Statius’ *Achilleid*, or Terence’s *Eunuchus* vividly depict adolescent boys acting on their sexual impulses, which might have provided adolescent readers with a sexual outlet, a kind of textualized fantasy which could stand in for more damaging, real-life alternatives. Marjorie Curry Woods has suggested that reading texts which revolve around adolescent characters could serve as a fantasy for medieval students, one which allowed them to rehearse or “try out” different positions of power, sexual roles, and gender roles. Depictions of heterosexual desire, adolescent sexual frustration, and the gendered body could serve as a mirror or model of behaviour for their readers, while sexual behaviours associated with adolescence, including rape, were authorized only for the fictional character, not for the reader. Classroom texts

49 Michel Foucault, “The battle for chastity” trans. Anthony Forster, in *Religion and culture* ed. Jeremy R. Carette (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 192. Foucault is quoting Cassian’s *Conferences*, 12.7; this is my own translation.

50 Marjorie Curry Woods, ”Rape and the pedagogical rhetoric of sexual violence”, in *Criticism and Dissent in the Middle Ages*, ed. Rita Copeland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 73.
could evoke real feelings and real power relations, as long as the sex associated with them remained imaginary.

While the Ovidian mock-didactic texts in the curriculum enculturate the reader to adopt “rules” for love, and to see gendered sexual behaviour as learned, and satirical texts function to “praise and blame” licit and illicit behaviours, other texts operate outside of such embedded interpretive frameworks.⁵¹ Although still classed as “ethical”, texts like *Pamphilus, Achilleid* or *Eunuchus* present descriptions of sexual thoughts, feelings and actions separate from the framework of judgment embedded in the didactic and satirical genres; the outcomes of these thoughts and actions are more subject to the interpretation of the commentator and reader. For example, one widespread *accessus* for *Achilleid* states that the *utilitas* of the work is merely “intelligere quod a[u]ctor vult docere, vel sic utilitas: cognicio gestorum Achillis” [to understand what the author wants to teach us, or the utilitas is the knowledge of the deeds of Achilles].⁵² This is relatively non-specific compared to the *utilitas* we have seen commentators give for the *Ars amatoria*, as discussed in Chapter 2. Commentaries and glosses are thus especially

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⁵¹ Although Donatus and Isidore classed Terence with satirists, by the twelfth century satire and comedy were considered fairly separate from one another. See Birger Munk Olsen, *L’étude des auteurs classiques latins aux Xle et XIIe siècles* (Paris: CNRS éditions, 2009), vol. 4, part 1, 178-182.

important framing devices for these texts because they help the reader to identify the ethical models embedded in the story.

Terence’s *Eunuchus* and Statius’ *Achilleid* both depict male adolescents as governed by lust, irrational, susceptible to cross-dressing, and as the perpetrators of rape. *Eunuchus*, one of Terence’s most popular plays even in his own lifetime, was commonly read in schools throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance.\(^{53}\) It was adapted from several of Menander’s works, and involves two main overlapping plots. Chaerea, whose story forms one of the two parallel storylines, is repeatedly referred to as *adolescens* and *ephebus* in both the text and commentaries; the play specifies that he is sixteen (*Eun* 693). With the help of his slave, Parmeno, Chaerea dresses up as a eunuch in order to infiltrate the home of Thais, a *meretrix*, after seeing that she has acquired an attractive new slave, Pamphila, who is also sixteen. Chaerea manages to trade places, and clothes, with an older eunuch given to Thais as a gift. Once Chaerea has passed for a eunuch, cornered Pamphila alone, and raped her, he learns that she is not a slave, but an Athenian citizen from an esteemed family. One of the play’s key “jokes” is that a possible punishment for raping a citizen is castration, so Chaerea could become a real eunuch. A “happy” (from the Roman or medieval perspective) ending ensues when,

rather than being punished, Chaerea is allowed to marry his victim, which is a common outcome in Terence’s works (and a legal remedy for rape in both Roman and medieval judicial systems).

The scholarship on medieval, and especially twelfth-century, commentaries on Terence is far from exhaustive. The late antique commentary of Donatus, which became popular as of the fifteenth century, exists in very few complete manuscripts for the medieval period, but is present in fragments. Similarly, the fifth- or sixth-century commentary by Eugraphius has been traced through various excerpts and a few extant medieval copies, dating mostly from the eleventh century. There are a number of extant manuscripts which document a medieval commentary tradition, perhaps more accurately described as a medieval tradition consisting of standardized sets of scholia which are sometimes recompiled in the form of separately circulating commentaries. The Commentum Brunsianum (ninth century) and the Commentum Monacense (tenth century) share glosses both with each other and with glossed manuscripts of Terence,

54 See Benjamin Victor, “History of the Text and Scholia”, in The Blackwell Companion to Terence (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 343-362. Although this claims to be an overview of scholia it is primarily about Donatus’ commentary and devotes only two pages to the entire commentary tradition of the Middle Ages.

55 Olsen, L’étude des auteurs classiques vol. 4.1, 107

and contain complementary information which suggests a common source. These two commentaries, in turn, continued to be used and expanded throughout the twelfth century, and new commentaries were also produced. Because Terence was studied so extensively throughout the medieval period, determining the filiation between commentaries, their glosses, and glossed manuscripts is a complex process, and the twelfth-century material has barely been explored, although almost every manuscript from this period is glossed and four distinct commentaries have been identified (but never edited). The number of glossed manuscripts suggests that teachers made their own notes from a combination of sources including the commentaries already identified, but only further study will uncover the intricacies of this process.

Because of the complex nature of the body of commentary on Terence, a wide variety of sources could have played a role in twelfth-century classrooms. I have examined Donatus’ and Eugraphius’ commentaries on Eunuchus as edited by Wessner; although full manuscripts of these works are fairly rare before the fourteenth century, they must have been more widely available than extant manuscripts indicate, due to the


58 Munk Olsen, L’étude des auteurs classiques, vol. 4.1, 108-110. Eugraphius’s commentary sometimes includes interpolations from the Brusianum from the tenth century onward, while many twelfth-century glossed manuscripts include selections from various previous commentaries.

59 Munk Olsen, L’étude des auteurs classiques, vol. 4.1, 110.
widespread presence of glosses and quotations from both works in other medieval commentaries and glossed manuscripts.\textsuperscript{60} I also made use of Paul Bruns’ 1811 edition of the \textit{Brunsianum}: compiled from a single eleventh century exemplar, with a somewhat confusing layout by today’s standards, it remains the only full edition of this commentary ever produced.\textsuperscript{61} A brief look at Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek Gl. kgl. Saml. 1995 4°, fols. 4rB-7rA confirmed that this twelfth-century commentary known by its incipit “Auctor iste” contains a number of glosses which differ from those of previous commentaries on \textit{Eunuchus}, but further study is needed to determine its relationship to the wider corpus.\textsuperscript{62} Schlee’s work on the “scholia Terentiana” provides further examples of eleventh- and twelfth-century approaches to Terence’s work as well as portions of the \textit{Brunsianum} and \textit{Monacense} commentaries.\textsuperscript{63} All of the medieval commentaries provide fairly short, simple explanations or synonyms to facilitate the

\textsuperscript{60} Paul Wessner, ed., \textit{Aelii Donati quod fertur Commentum Terenti; accedant Eugraphi Commentum et Scholia Bembina} 3 vols (Leipzig: Teubner, 1902). Reeve and Rouse identify Northern France as a specific area of influence for Donatus’ commentary through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; quotations can be found in a Northern French lexicographer’s work (probably in the area of Orléans) as well as in a poem by Hugh of Orléans. Reeve and Rouse, “New light”, 235-239.


\textsuperscript{62} Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek Gl. kgl. Saml. 1995 4°, fols. 4rB-7rA.

\textsuperscript{63} Friedrich Schlee, ed., \textit{Scholia Terentiana} (Leipzig: Teubner, 1893).
student’s comprehension of the story; only in the late antique commentaries is any more extensive cultural information provided.

Statius’ *Achilleid* had a special appeal for lower levels of schooling, because its brevity (under 1200 lines in total), content and style made it well-suited for relative beginners (unlike Statius’ more popular, but much longer, *Thebaid*). The text was especially popular as part of the *Liber Catonianis*, which generally contained texts for low-elementary readers, including Theodolus, Maximianus, the *Disticha Catonis*, Avianus’ fables, and Claudian’s *De raptu Proserpinae*.64

Statius’ *Achilleid* tells the story of Achilles’ early life, prior to his role in the Trojan war. Statius gathers minor details mentioned in passing in various prior literary sources as the basis for his work, and draws on well-known characters, but produces a unique story which itself has no precedent in Latin literature.65 Although the text is considered unfinished by scholars today, it comprises a fairly complete segment of a larger story,

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and medieval commentators provided the text with a structure which implied that it was complete.\textsuperscript{66}

Achilles’ mother Thetis, who is herself immortal, fears that her mortal son will come to harm in the impending Trojan war. She dips the infant Achilles in the river Styx, making his body mostly invulnerable, but still fears that he will die, and attempts to hide him away from the war altogether. She first hides him in the mountains, under the care of Chiron, a centaur. Here, Achilles engages in hypermasculine pursuits with all-male (and centaur) companions, hunting and terrorizing wild animals, with minimal supervision, as well as receiving an education from Chiron which was the subject of much admiration in the classical period, and often depicted in Roman art.\textsuperscript{67} But Thetis becomes concerned that her son might still be found, and decides to dress him as a woman, in order to hide him amongst the daughters of King Lycomedes, on the remote island of Scyros. Here, Achilles is initiated into a cult for virgin girls, and becomes friends with the king’s eldest daughter, Deidamia, whom he rapes during a Bacchic ceremony. Deidamia becomes pregnant, but manages to hide her pregnancy, and keeps Achilles’ secret, until Ulysses arrives and reveals Achilles’ true identity. A hasty

\textsuperscript{66} Clogan, Medieval Achilleid, 22. The accessus in Clogan’s edition explains that the work is made up of five books. I have not seen any other accessus which implies that the work is incomplete.

\textsuperscript{67} See Heslin’s discussion of Achilles’ education, which included music and the performance of poetry, as well as the “manly arts” of fighting and hunting. Heslin, Transvestite Achilles, 87.
marriage is arranged, then Achilles leaves with Ulysses to undertake his role in the Trojan war.

Paul Clogan has edited a text of *Achilleid* with glosses representing a medieval tradition of the early thirteenth century, which was most likely developed in the previous century. The study of the last two works of the *Liber Catonianis, Achilleid* and Claudian’s *De raptu Proserpinae*, began to wane by the early fourteenth century, so it makes sense to see these commentary traditions as reflecting past trends rather than an evolving tradition. The commentary in Clogan’s edition tends to paraphrase the verses in simpler words, and provides basic context in terms of mythology, while mostly focusing on explaining the plot.

3.4 Depicting adolescent desire

The idea that sexual desire clouds the budding rationality of adolescent boys is vividly demonstrated in both the *Achilleid* and *Eunuchus*. The adolescent heroes Achilles and Chaerea are struck by “love” at first sight and immediately become obsessed with getting closer to the object of their desire. This desire also drives them into a mental state which is pathologized as sickness or madness, and which makes them vulnerable to questionable propositions by other characters – Thetis uses faulty logic to convince

Achilles to dress as a girl, and Chaerea takes his slave’s joking suggestion that he dress like a eunuch seriously.\(^69\) Overall, such depictions emphasize the irrationality of lust-fuelled behaviour and its difference from mature, rational forms of desire which respect social boundaries. The intensity of this lust, and its expression, often culminating in rape, marks the sexuality of male adolescents as separate from that of other men.\(^70\)

At the same time, the school texts and commentaries seem to encourage the student to fully understand the way these heroes experience lust. Achilles’ first glimpse of Deidamia is described in vivid detail, with the inclusion of many physical qualities which invite the reader to form a complete sensory picture of both internal and external signs of desire:

\[
\text{hanc ubi ducentem longe socia agmina vidit,} \\
\text{trux puer et nullo temeratus pectora motu} \\
\text{diriguit totisque novum [bibit] ossibus ignem.}\(^71\) \\
\text{nec latet haustus amor, sed fax vibrata medullis} \\
\text{in vultus atque ora redit lucemque genarum} \\
\text{tingit et inpulsum tenui sudore pererrat.} \\
\text{lactea Massagete veluti cum pocula fuscant} \\
\text{sanguine puniceo vel ebur corrumpitur ostro,} \\
\text{sic variis manifesta notis palletque rubetque}
\]


\(^70\) Sobczyk has observed a similar trend in her examination of adolescent characters in the *lais* and *romans* of medieval France. Sobczyk, *L’érotisme des adolescents*, 6-7.

\(^71\) Clogan’s edition of the medieval text of the *Achilleid* is missing “bibit” here – I assume this is an error, since his glosses include an explanation of “bibit” and there is no mention of it in the critical apparatus. See Clogan, *Medieval Achilleid*, 54.
flamma recens. [...]  

(Ach. 1.301-310)  

[When he saw her leading a crowd of her companions at a distance, the fierce boy, never before dishonoured by any stirrings of passion, grew still [or: stiffened] and drank this new fire in throughout his bones. Nor does this love, once drunk in, lie hidden, but the fire flashing deep inside him comes back out to his face, and tinges the glow of his cheeks, and covers the lovestruck boy in a fine sweat. Just as the Massagetae darken milky-white bowls with a bloody crimson, or ivory is stained by purple dye, in the same way this sudden flame is evident through various signs: he turns pale, but also flushes.]

The commentary repeatedly mentions the speed with which Achilles’ fiery passion is aroused, and emphasizes its deeply internal effects (“ad interioria cordis lapsus” [sliding to his innermost heart]; “per medullas” [throughout his marrow]; “usque in venas” [all the way to his veins]).  

Achilles’ blushing, the most visible sign of his condition, is unusual for an epic hero but closely associated with adolescence. The commentary also explains that “diriguit” means “deorsum ariguit” [stiffened down below], implying that the commentator thinks Achilles’ very first reaction, before any other inner fire,

72 All quotations from the Achilleid are from Clogan’s edition, which reflects medieval versions of the text, but for the convenience of readers Clogan has retained the line numbering of modern editions, which divide the text into one long book of 960 lines and a shorter one of 168 lines. I will be using the modern books and line numbers in my citations. Translations are my own.

73 Clogan, Medieval Achilleid, 55.

74 Eyben, Restless Youth, 40-1.
was to get an erection.\textsuperscript{75} The vivid description of his posture, sweating, and inner heat allow the reader to inhabit the body of Achilles as he is overcome with lust.

The idea that the reader might share in the hero’s experience of desire is even more pronounced in Geoffroy de Vitry’s \textit{accessus} to De raptu Proserpinae. Geoffroy chooses to turn the reader’s attention towards Proserpina’s appearance, supplying details which do not appear in Claudian’s text:

\textit{Erat enim eius caesaries aurea, facies purpurea, oculi stellantes, supercilia harenata, frons lactea, cervix eburnea, colla liliis certantia, labia quoque modice tumentia ad basia invitabant. Cetera quae exteriorem fugiebant intuitum meliora putabantur.}\textsuperscript{76}

[She had flowing golden hair, a blushing face, starry eyes, sandy eyebrows, a milky forehead, an ivory neck, a throat [whose paleness] rivalled lilies, and lips that were a little swollen, asking to be kissed. Other things, which fled the external gaze, seemed even better.]

While Claudian’s own description of Proserpina veers towards an ecphrasis of her gown, the description given in the \textit{accessus} focuses on Proserpina’s body itself. Geoffroy’s description begins fairly innocuously, using commonplace expressions to describe Proserpina’s colouring and overall appearance, in terms that would have been familiar to readers of twelfth-century arts of poetry. Her lips are described as “encouraging kisses”, a description which shifts a fictional image into a potential site of

\textsuperscript{75}Clogan, \textit{Medieval Achilleid}, 54.

action on the part of the reader. This wording, along with the implication that her body hides even better hidden secrets, encourages the student to engage with Proserpina’s body himself, even as he reads about the actions of others. But why did the commentator feel the need to add his own description? Perhaps he felt that Claudian’s description of Proserpina’s gown was not compelling enough for his own audience of adolescents, and that these details about her body would help to capture their interest. He may also have presented this image in order to explain or justify Pluto’s actions. As Matthew of Vendôme explains, such descriptions of female beauty are intended to make the actions of the male protagonist more plausible to the (male) reader:

Amplius, si agatur de amoris efficatia, quomodo scilicet Iupiter Parrasidis amore exarserit, prelibanda est puellae descriptio et assignanda puellaris pulcritudinis elegantia, ut, audito speculo pulcritudinis, verisimile sit et quasi connecturale auditori Iovis medullas tot et tantis insudasse deliciis; precipua enim debuit esse affluentia pulcritudinis que Iovem impulit ad vitium corruptionis.

[Furthermore, if treating the effects of love, for example, how Jupiter burned with love for Callisto, the description of the girl must be poured forth and she should be credited with an elegance of girlish beauty so that, when the image of this beauty has been heard, it seems realistic and plausible to the hearer that Jupiter’s heart should get himself into a sweat over such great and varied delights. For it must have been an outstanding abundance of beauty which pushed Jupiter to the vice of [sexual] corruption].

Matthew’s approach emphasizes that such descriptions are not for the reader’s mere pleasure, but so that he can direct his attention back to the male protagonist and

understand his actions. The male author, male reader, and male protagonist must thus share a common understanding and interpretation of the function of female beauty as part of their shared (hetero)sexual culture. By reading about the sexual desire of Roman heroes and their subsequent actions, schoolboys are learning the cultural logic of the patriarchy they will be upholding as adult men. But this function of the school texts is complicated by the fact that the *Achilleid* and *Eunuchus* also demonstrate that adolescent boys are capable of performing a variety of gender roles, alluding to the inherent instability of gendered performance.

### 3.5 From boy to girl to man

Both Achilles and Chaerea present themselves as feminized – Achilles dresses as an adolescent girl, and Chaerea as a eunuch. The androgyny, or femininity, of male adolescents is much discussed in Greco-Roman sources. Traditions of pederasty in both ancient Greek and Roman cultures mean that boys are grouped with women as sexual partners for adult men.\(^78\) The beauty of adolescent boys is sometimes described as feminine (for example, by Lucretius, who describes a boy as having a womanly body), and sometimes as superior to women’s beauty.\(^79\) The most attractive boys were those

\(^{78}\) For examples, see Craig Williams, *Roman Homosexuality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 20-29.

\(^{79}\) Ibid., 23-4.
who had not yet grown a beard, who thus retained the “flos aetatis”[flower of youth]. The combination of this “girlish” appearance with a fully functioning penis was clearly fascinating to both Roman and medieval audiences, and several school texts centre around the ability of an adolescent boy to dress up like a woman in order to achieve sexual gratification. The feminization of adolescent boys may also relate to pervasive beliefs linking gender and sexual desire: according to many Roman and medieval scientific models, women were more prone to lust than men, due to their bodies’ humoural makeup and weaker ability to use reason to control their urges. This means that excessive, or uncontrollable, lust was not seen as hyper-masculine (as it is in some cultures today), but as feminine. By clothing lustful adolescent boys in women’s clothing, Roman authors are signalling that these boys lack the rational control which characterises maleness. They also hint at the fact that these boys can be sexual partners for men, although the boys’ femininity is generally repurposed in these plotlines as a disguise directed at seducing women.

When Roman ideas about the fluidity of adolescent gender and sexuality come into the medieval classroom, they travel a long way from their original context. Pederasty was no longer a mainstream part of medieval society, although the beauty of boys was still highly valued, especially by men writing classicizing poetry during the eleventh and

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80 Williams, Roman Homosexuality, 79; Eyben, Restless Youth, 39.
twelfth centuries. Marbod of Rennes (c1035-1123) and Baudri of Bourgueil (1046-1130) both praise young men’s beauty in terms of the feminine. Marbod mentions a boy “qui facile bella possit satis esse puella” [who could just as well have been a pretty girl], and Baudri points out that only age distinguishes girls from boys; both men agree with their Roman predecessors that aging makes boys lose this alluring beauty. Similarly, the commentator on the Achilleid repeatedly emphasizes Achilles’ beauty in a way that places him between genders. Statius introduces Achilles in the hypermasculine environment of Chiron’s mountain home, and we first see him from his mother’s perspective (Ach 1.159-62):

ille aderat multo sudore et pulvere maior,
et tamen arma inter festinatosque labores
dulcis adhuc visu: niveo natat ignis in ore
purpureus fulvoque nitet coma gratior auro.

[he arrived, made bigger by so much sweat and dust, but still, among his weapons and hasty labours, he was pleasant to look upon: a purple fire swirls across his snow-white face and and his hair shines, more beautiful than tawny gold.]

Thetis has not seen Achilles in some time, and is astonished at how much larger and older Achilles seems (“maior”); the commentary repeatedly mentions Achilles’ beauty in glossing this passage: “dulcis erat; visu ad videndum pulcher”, “illius pulchritudine et etatem ostendit dicens PURPUREUS” [he was lovely; beautiful to behold; the author

shows his beauty and age by saying ‘purpureus’]. In the second part of this
description, Achilles’ more feminine qualities are emphasized (Ach. 1.163-5):

necdum prima nova lanugine vertitur aetas,
tranquilleque faces oculis et plurima vultu
mater inest [...] 

[his youth is not yet changed by new downy hair, and tranquil flames inhabit his
eyes and there is much of his mother in his face...]

Achilles does not yet have a beard (the commentary supplies “barba” for “nova
lanugine”), and the commentator is careful to explain that “vultus Achillis, licet virilis,
plurimum representat vultum Thethidis” [Achilles’ face, although male, very much
resembles Thetis’ face]. This comment underlines the fact that even before Achilles’
transformation, his great beauty and lack of a beard made him less than completely
masculine; as Statius will later remark, “sexus pariterque decet”[either sex suits him]
(Ach. 1.605). Even Statius’ use of “purpureus” in the passage above might skew towards
the feminine if students remembered it as a descriptor of the adolescent girl Proserpina;
it is also used to describe Deidamia (Ach. 1.297 and glosses), and generally characterizes
“the unspoiled beauty of maidens or of gods”.  

82 Clogan, Medieval Achilleid, 39. Clogan’s edition uses italics to indicate an interlinear gloss and block
capitals to indicate a lemma with accompanying marginal gloss, and I have preserved this format in my
quotations.

83 Clogan, Medieval Achilleid, 40.

84 Geoffrey of Vitry, Commentary, 49-50 (glossing Claudian, De raptu 1.272) and the accessus cited above at
n75; Heslin, Transvestite Achilles, 182-3.
Once Achilles has changed into women’s clothes, he becomes even more attractive. His beauty is repeatedly mentioned in the commentary to Ach. 1.604-614, when Achilles participates in the all-female rites of Bacchus. His appearance surpasses that of Deidamia—“Deidamia erat pulcrior omnibus virginibus antequam Achilles esset inter eas sed iam non erat pulcrior quia ADMOTA” [Deidamia was more beautiful than any of the girls before Achilles had come among them, but now she was not more beautiful, because she was approached [by Achilles]].

For the medieval commentator, Achilles’ beauty and success as a girl may have signalled a profound shift in his gender, so much so that a change in pronoun was appropriate. The commentator sometimes uses a female ending or pronoun to describe Achilles’ gender when s/he is part of a group of women. While Statius generally avoids using a gendered pronoun for Achilles, the medieval commentary has a tendency to swing between male and female pronouns, for example, “loco id est dant locum et recipiunt eam in chorea. taliter virgines reverentur Achillem” [loco that is, they gave way and took her into their group. This is how much the young girls respected Achilles]. The commentator refers to Achilles by name, and as “her”, simultaneously. In several other places, including during the rape scene, the commentary uses the

85 Clogan, Medieval Achilleid, 85.
86 Clogan, Medieval Achilleid, 61 (gloss to Ach 1.371); emphasis mine.
feminine plural “aliae” to refer to Achilles and the “other girls”. The commentator’s view is obviously that Achilles’ maleness can be overridden by his gender performance.

One key difference between the gender fluidity of Achilles and that of Chaerea is that the eunuch is himself a gender-ambiguous figure. Eunuchs were initially associated with eastern kingdoms, appearing in Greek sources describing Persia and North Africa. But by the late antique period, eunuchs could be found in the Western Roman empire, and are mentioned in a wide variety of sources. Romans perceived eunuchs as feminine, because of their lack of functioning male genitals, but also as plagued by lust for women (probably for the same reason), so their gender identity remained rather fluid. Eunuchs were associated with many of the same stereotyped qualities as women, including excessive lust, carnality, irrationality and a propensity for deception. During the medieval period, eunuchs were less common in Western Europe, but continued to be associated with the Byzantine empire and Islamic kingdoms, where the practice of castration continued. Christians also used the eunuch as a symbol for the self-control and asexuality of priests and monks, thus associating eunuchs with positive, “manly”

87 See Clogan, Medieval Achilleid, 88. Achilles brandishes the thyrsus “sicut alie” [like the other girls], immediately after the rape (gloss to Ach 1.648).


89 Kuefler, Manly Eunuch, 35.
qualities.\textsuperscript{90} None of these positive qualities appear in \textit{Eunuchus} or in its glosses, but the students must have been fairly familiar with the term “eunuch”, as it is not glossed in any of the commentaries to Terence’s work examined here.\textsuperscript{91} Twelfth-century European students might have been more familiar with castration in their own cultures as a judicial (or extrajudicial) punishment for sodomy, rape or seduction.\textsuperscript{92} The extrajudicial castration of Peter Abelard, one of the most famous teachers in twelfth-century Paris, may have heightened students’ awareness of the danger Chaerea faces as punishment for his actions.

Chaerea, like Achilles, displays an attractive mixture of masculine and feminine characteristics. Chaerea’s alluring appearance in his disguise is the subject of some discussion and is one of the key jokes in this subplot of \textit{Eunuchus}. It is heavily implied that Chaerea’s age gives him the same gender-fluid qualities as a eunuch, even before he puts on his costume. Parmeno, the slave who convinces Chaerea to attempt this disguise, states that Chaerea will succeed in his deception “praeterea forma et aetas

\textsuperscript{90}See Kuefler, \textit{Manly Eunuch}, 267-9.

\textsuperscript{91}A gloss on \textit{spado} in a twelfth-century commentary to Juvenal (\textit{Sat} 1.22) explains that castration at different times of life has different effects on sexual “apetitum” but assumes a basic familiarity with the concept of castration; Bengt Löfstedt, ed., \textit{Vier Juvenal-Kommentare aus dem 12 Jh.} (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1995), 10.

ipsast, facile ut pro eunucho probes” [because of your physical form and your very age, you could easily pass for a eunuch] (Eun 375); Brunsianum explains “quia imberbis et ephebis existis” [because you have no beard and are adolescent], while Donatus notes “formam, quia pulcher, aetatem, quia ephebus” [form, because he is beautiful, age, because he is adolescent].

93 These comments, like the descriptions of Achilles above, construct male adolescent bodies as liminally gendered. Donatus also notes that similarly to a real eunuch, Chaerea has strong desires which he cannot quite physically fulfil due to his young age, implying that he lacks a fully adult sexuality.

94 Chaerea’s gender-transitional state as a eunuch is attractive to other characters in the narrative: he is repeatedly described as “liberalis”, “honestus”, and “aetate integra” (basically, a fresh-faced youth of an aristocratic appearance and manner), which Donatus explains saying “in flore et pubere” [blossoming and adolescent].

95 Unlike Achilles, Chaerea’s beauty attracts the attention of men, especially Thraso (a miles gloriosus character), who implies that he is interested in Chaerea sexually (Eun 479). Thraso’s exclamation was well understood by Eugraphius and medieval commentators: while Eugraphius explains that Thraso is expressing the fact that beauty can turn a person to unseemly lusts, GKS 1995’s commentary simply explains that Thraso means “amabo istum” [I will

93 Bruns, Comediae, 194; Wessner, Commentum Terenti vol. 1, 351.

94 Wessner, Commentum Terenti vol. 1, 333.

95 See Eun 473 and 681; Wessner, Commentum Terenti vol. 1, 375.
have sex with him]. Chaerea’s adolescent beauty, along with his gender-transgressive disguise, make him a possible sexual partner for Thraso and other men, a fact which is played for laughs here, but which Juvenal and his medieval commentators take much more seriously, as we will see below.

Masquerading as a eunuch does not quite equate to dressing as a woman. The very designation of a person as a eunuch highlights his sexuality, and raises questions around the (im)possibility of sex for the person who bears that title, while also conjuring up male fears of castration. The eunuch’s gender status hints at the fact that the relationship between sexual performance and gender can be destabilized, or that these can be separated from one another – the eunuch is thought to lack the sexual function of his penis, but may still appear male and exhibit the same sexual desire as other men. Eugraphius addresses this when he struggles to explain the appellation “senem mulierem” [old man-lady?] (Eun 357), which describes the elderly eunuch Chaerea replaces, saying “sexus a mare alienus videtur” [his sex seems to be other than male], while Brunsianum simply explains “hoc est effeminatam” [that is, effeminate]. Thus, by dressing as a eunuch, Chaerea trades his adolescent gender fluidity for a different kind of gender instability.

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96 Wessner, Commentum Terenti vol. 3.1, 119; GKS 1995, fol. 6rA.
The extent to which Achilles and Chaerea are able to fully regain their masculinity is the subject of some debate. Some critics maintain that the “heroic rapes” committed by these characters dramatize the impermanence and flimsiness of their feminine disguises: as Richlin remarks, “When we want to know the gender of the adolescent hero dressed in women’s clothing, the signifier of his maleness is his ability to commit rape”. But rape is one instance of gender performance among many in these two works, and it is significant that in neither story does rape accompany an immediate reversion to the male gender: Achilles spends at least nine more months dressed as a girl (and, as Heslin remarks, “the most humiliating scenes for him are staged after his self-assertion of his masculinity and his consequent rape of Deidamia”) and Chaerea never gets a chance to change out of his eunuch’s clothes, even after the revelation of his identity and announcement of his marriage, implying that such clothing is easier to put on than to lay aside.

Medieval commentators were especially skeptical about Achilles’ ability to fully revert to masculinity. Tertullian’s account of Achilles’ childhood, included as part of a

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97 As quoted by Heslin, *Transvestite Achilles*, 275. But as Heslin notes, this quotation refers to the Ovidian context for Achilles’ rape of Deidamia, which differs from Statius’ account. See also Sharon James, “From boys to men: rape and developing masculinity in Terence’s *Hecyra* and *Eunuchus*” *Helios* 25 (1998), 31-47, for a similar perspective on rape in *Eunuchus* and Woods, “Rape and the Pedagogical Rhetoric of Sexual Violence” for rape in the *Achilleid*.

98 Heslin, *Transvestite Achilles*, 269
discussion of dress and effeminacy in *De pallio*, implies that Achilles’ continued efforts to dress and act female, even after growing a beard and committing rape, caused a permanent weakening of his masculinity. The symbol of this effeminacy is a gold earring, which Achilles continues to wear even after his reversion to masculine dress. Servius mentions this same fact in his commentary on *Aeneid* 1.30, which would have been familiar to medieval students, saying “in extima auris parte elenchum more femineo habuerit” [he had an earring in the outer part of his ear, according to feminine fashion]. These comments suggest that Achilles was permanently affected by his time on Scyros and that he willingly retained a visible reminder of his life as a girl.

3.6 How to succeed as a eunuch without really trying

The description of these adolescent boys, in both text and commentary, highlights the fact that their gender is malleable due to their age. But the transformations undergone by Achilles and Chaerea have slightly different implications in terms of the amount of preparation needed in order to “pass” convincingly in their respective disguises. Chaerea’s shift in gender is focused chiefly on his costume, and he does not do anything other than trade in his clothes in order to successfully impersonate a eunuch: he already


100 Heslin, *Transvestite Achilles*, 272n95.
knows how to act like one. This implies that the effeminacy attributed to eunuchs is in fact shared by all men, and that men are capable of a range of gendered performances.

Achilles, on the other hand, needs extensive help from his mother in order to present himself as a girl. Not only does Thetis take pains to transform him physically, adjusting his clothes and hair, but she must also teach him how to behave like a woman.

...tunc colla rigentia mollit
submititique graves umeros et fortia laxat
brachia et inpexos certo domat ordine crines
ac sua dilecta cervice monilia transfert;
et picturato cohibens vestigia limbo
incessum motumque docet fandique pudorem.

*(Ach 326-331)*

[...then she softens his stiff neck, and presses down his heavy shoulders, and slackens his strong arms, and asserts control over his uncombed hair, and shifts her own necklaces onto her beloved son’s neck; then, with the decorated border [of his skirt] restricting his steps, she teaches him how to walk and gesture and speak modestly].

Much of Thetis’ instruction involves “loosening” and “softening” Achilles’ stance, which Heslin points out is a reversal of traditional Roman physiognomy, the foundation for much of the behavioural training that took place in Roman schools.\(^{101}\)

The fact that such behaviours are not innate, but learned and highly flexible, is demonstrated in both Statius’ text and the medieval glosses. Statius uses the metaphor of wax (which, as we have seen, was common in educational discourse) to show that

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both Achilles’ body and mind are highly malleable “qualiter artificis iuncture pollice cere/accipiunt formas ignemque manumque sequuntur” [just as wax things, joined by the thumb of the craftsperson, take on shapes and follow the guidance of fire and hand] (Ach 1.332-3). The commentator observes that wax figures “ad ignem molescunt et in quamlibet figuram ex artificis arbitrio transseunt” [soften near the fire and transform into any kind of shape, according to the will of the craftsperson], implying that Achilles has given himself over entirely to the will of the “craftsperson”, his mother.102 This idea also evokes medieval notions that mothers can physically mould their children, especially babies, using swaddling and other techniques.103 The commentator offers an alternative interpretation of this softening in the gloss to “colla rigentia mollit” (Ach 1.326), saying “ut more molli se habeat docet et instruit.” [she taught and prepared him to behave in a soft/effeminate way].104 The commentator’s use of mollescere or mollis, while entirely appropriate in the context, also evokes the many fraught meanings of mollis in describing male gender and sexuality, suggesting that this behaviour is less than desirable.105

102 Clogan, Medieval Achilleid, 57.
103 Shahar, Childhood, 88-9.
104 Clogan, Medieval Achilleid, 57.
105 See my discussion in Chapter 2.
Although they offer slightly different perspectives on gender performance, the texts and glosses to *Achilleid* and *Eunuchus* suggest that such performances are highly adaptable. If, as Butler has suggested, gender is produced “through the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame, that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance”, these adolescent characters demonstrate that some performative instances of gender can be fleeting and variable, and perhaps even that gender can be broken down into “constitutive acts”. This is not to suggest that these particular performative acts are subversive, in Butler’s sense (they are still too stereotyped and heteronormative), but the notion, made clear in the texts and glosses, that Achilles and Chaerea (and perhaps adolescent boys in general) possess an innate gender-fluidity which allows them to perform a range of genders points to the notion that all gender performance has an artificial quality. From the medieval perspective, this means that such performativity must be carefully learned.

*Eunuchus’* perspective is that “clothes make the eunuch”, suggesting what Sedgwick might term a “universalizing” discourse: the eunuch’s identity does not stem from a


107 I am using the term “artificial” here in a way that would certainly displease Butler, who argues that the binary between “real” and “artificial” is one of many “regulatory fictions” which allow some gender performances to constitute the natural rather than others (see Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 43). But the tendency of these particular texts and their medieval commentaries is to maintain such regulatory fictions despite the presentation of multiple possibilities of gender performance.
fundamental difference from other men, rather, being a eunuch means acting like a eunuch, which is possible for any boy.¹⁰⁸ Statius’ parodic reversal of traditional masculine physiognomy in Achilles’ transformation highlights the possibility that through instruction, or habit, and especially through the excessive influence of mothers, boys can be feminized. Both models posit an inherent instability of gender in adolescent boys, and highlight the role of other social actors in encouraging or curtailing gender play (Chaerea’s slave, Parmeno, initially suggests the disguise as a joke, but ends up helping him; Thetis encourages Achilles to dress and act as a woman, while Ulysses brings an abrupt end to his female performance).

As school texts, these stories present a relatively positive depiction of feminized or emasculated adolescents, especially when compared to the feminized men depicted in the satirical tradition, as we will see below. The idea that such emasculated boys could be heroes might have been encouraging to young readers whose own roles as men in the clerical sphere were limited by many factors.¹⁰⁹ These two stories show that a young man can take on the dress and habitus of an emasculated figure, but still hope to regain a masculine identity. This is especially relevant for those students who wished to obtain an education in order to work in the courts of secular nobles: in a sense their

¹⁰⁹ See my discussion in Ch 1.
incarceration at school was temporary, and their emasculation need perhaps not be permanent. At the same time, the texts link adolescents’ lack of rationality with poor decisions regarding gender performance and sexual activity. This adolescent propensity to “slip” was not always treated with the humour of Statius and Terence. The combination of a wavering gender performance with poor rationality was associated with the need for special supervision and education, as I have discussed above. *Eunuchus* and *Achilleid* begin to demonstrate the danger for adolescents of heeding the wrong advice, although dire consequences never materialize for either protagonist. It is in Juvenal’s *Saturae* that students learn that the anxieties surrounding their gendered sexual performance, based on the very qualities described in *Eunuchus* and *Achilleid*, are connected to that most speakable of vices: sex between men.

### 3.7 An increasingly speakable vice

Commentators on Juvenal’s satires often use the term “sodomiticus” and its variants to identify men who are sexually deviant. Sodomy is a notoriously difficult term to define, because of its wide range of uses in the medieval context, describing a number of illicit sexual acts including adultery, illicit sexual positions, and bestiality. Mark Jordan has traced the “invention” of sodomy as this definition became narrower as of the late
eleventh century, coming to refer most often to sex between men. But Jordan and many other scholars working with theological and legal sources allude to the fact that phrases such as “vitium contra naturam”, although used very frequently, are rarely defined with specificity, perhaps reflecting a reluctance to confront the details of this “unmentionable vice”, allowing it to occupy a constantly shifting space. As Goodich has shown, references to the “sin against nature” multiply by the twelfth century, but biblical Sodom or specific sex acts between men are not always mentioned. Penitential manuals are also accompanied by warnings that confessors should take care not to ask too many detailed questions about same sex contact, in case they introduce the penitent to new ways of sinning.


112 Michael Goodich, *The Unmentionable Vice: Homosexuality in the Later Medieval Period* (Santa Barbara: Clio Press, 1979), 23-39. While Gratian’s *Decretum* contains explicit condemnations of sodomy defined as sex between men (see p. 32), Lombard’s *Sentences*, on the other hand, barely mentions it (p. 33). Other texts from the eleventh and twelfth centuries continue to consider sodomy as a sexual offense that can include, but is not limited to, sex between men.

At the same time, sodomy as it relates to clerics in homosocial environments seems to have been the focus of increasing concern, with real world implications: the councils of 1102 (London), 1179 (Third Lateran), 1211 (Paris), and 1214 (Rouen) outline specific punishments for clergy who commit sodomy and measures geared towards limiting the frequency of sodomy amongst the clergy.\textsuperscript{114} In the mid-eleventh century, Pope Leo IX, responding to Peter Damian’s savage condemnation of sodomy in his \textit{Liber Gomorhianus}, took a practical and realist approach to disciplining clerics who confessed to sodomy (or were otherwise found out), keeping in mind how long a given cleric had been involved in the practice and the number of sexual partners he had, allowing for clerics to regain their rank after appropriate penance.\textsuperscript{115} He obviously viewed clerical sodomy as a fairly common, regrettable occurrence, but not one that should permanently disqualify a man from serving as a cleric. By the early twelfth century, Anselm writes hyperbolically that sodomy is so common amongst the clergy that many do not even know it is a sin, while many popular songs and poems associate urban centres, and their cathedral schools, with sex between clergymen and boys.\textsuperscript{116} In

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{114} See Burgwinkle’s discussion of these councils, \textit{Sodomy}, 31-2.


\textsuperscript{116} Boswell, \textit{Christianity}, 215.
\end{flushleft}
a poem which echoes Juvenal in almost every stanza, as well as language used in medieval glosses to Juvenal, Walter of Châtillon writes:

Filiii nobilium, dum sint iuniores,  
mittuntur in Franciam fieri doctores,  
quos prece vel precio domant corruptores.  
Sic pretextatos referunt Artaxata mores.

[The sons of nobles are sent to France to become scholars, while they are young, but they are conquered by seducers who use either pleas or bribes. Thus they bring the habits of debauched Roman youth back to Artaxata]¹¹⁷

The last line of this stanza is a direct quotation from Sat 2.170, where Juvenal describes youths sent to Rome as hostages who take on male lovers, and return home to far-flung places with the sexual habits of Roman youths. Twelfth-century graffiti in a ninth-century manuscript repeatedly associates the schools of Paris, Chartres, Sens and Orléans with sodomy and male prostitution.¹¹⁸ An explosion of Latin poems with homoerotic themes occurs around the same time, mostly emerging from the schools of Northern France.¹¹⁹ The freedom of movement enjoyed by students at urban schools gave them the potential to participate in a variety of sexual activities outside the school


¹¹⁸ Texts are printed in both Boswell and Stehling, from Leiden, Vossianus Latinus in oct. 88, a manuscript formerly held at Orléans. Thomas Stehling, ed. and trans., Medieval Latin Poems of Male Love and Friendship (New York: Garland, 1984), 95-104; Boswell, Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality, 261-5.

¹¹⁹ See Stehling’s collection for many examples; see Burgwinkle’s discussion of the associations between sodomy and schools, Sodomy, 46-7.
environment, including visiting prostitutes or acting as prostitutes themselves. The fact that students and teachers lived together, either in private houses or in uncloistered, often overcrowded all-male living conditions in the grounds of schools or cathedrals meant that schools themselves began to be regarded with suspicion as places where sexual contact between men was likely to occur.

Even if such concerns are exaggerated, as part of the tendency of eleventh- and twelfth-century reforms to scrutinize clerical behaviour and sexuality, they indicate a culturally significant anxiety. The study of Juvenal during the twelfth century must be read alongside this anxiety, which seems to include a special concern for the homosocial school environment as a potential site for sodomy. This concern was common to Juvenal and to his twelfth-century commentators, perhaps accounting for the increased popularity of Juvenal in schools during this period. While Alan of Lille’s personification of Nature, as a pagan or classical figure, lacks the word “sodomy” to describe the sexual practices which so enrage her, commentators on Juvenal do not hesitate to provide him with it, and the glosses on the satires are littered with the word. If, in legal and theological contexts, sodomy’s definition is adaptable to many circumstances, in the schoolroom it is understood to refer specifically to sex between men.

3.8 The naked satyr as praecceptor

Capripedes sunt Satiri, quia caper est fetidum animal, et ipsa [satira] fetida, quia fetida vicia reprehendendo ex immundis verbis est conposita.
Satyrs are goat-footed, because the goat is a filthy animal, and a satire is dirty because it rebukes dirty vices, and thus is composed using foul language]

- Twelfth-century *accessus*¹²⁰

Satire was a highly prized genre in the medieval school curriculum; the satirical works of Persius, Horace and Juvenal are listed in many model curricula from the ninth century onwards, as well as being bound together in school collections. Juvenal’s work experienced a surge in popularity during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, based on extant manuscripts – 78 copies date from these two centuries alone.¹²¹ Satire was seen as quintessentially ethical because of its basic theme of “praise and blame”, and was especially suited to elementary levels of education because satirical texts were thought to lack the *integumentum* (metaphorical “covering”) of other poetic genres. As one twelfth-century *accessus* explains, Juvenal’s satires are “nudi, quia nude et aperte et clare, id est sine ambagibus et circuicionibus et sine integumento, Romanorum vicia reprehendit”[naked, because Juvenal confronts the vices of the Romans nakedly and openly and clearly, that is, without ambiguity or circumlocution and without *integumentum*].¹²² Satires were thus ideally suited for the literal reading associated with *ennaratio*.


On the surface, satire might seem an ideal component of an ethical curriculum for young children, because it is inherently judgmental about the nature of the behaviours and lifestyles it describes. The negative attitudes expressed by Persius, Horace and Juvenal about excesses of dress and food are perfectly suited to monastic and clerical environments alike. Juvenal’s emphasis on appropriate roles and behaviours for men encouraged students to turn a critical eye towards themselves and others, and provided a conceptual lexicon for discussing such topics as gender deviance and sex between men. At the same time, as the quotation at the beginning of this section suggests, teachers had to confront a large amount of “foul” language and a range of topics from gender deviance to sodomy to prostitution, without ever resorting to allegorization because of the “naked” quality of satirical writing. This was one of the main challenges for Juvenal’s twelfth-century commentators.

The medieval commentary tradition for the Saturae is extremely complex: almost every manuscript in existence is glossed, and along with a “vulgate” commentary in several versions, there are five twelfth-century commentaries which combine elements of the vulgate with new material.¹²³ I have consulted Löfstedt’s edition of four twelfth-century commentaries as representative of the range of approaches to teaching Juvenal’s text.

¹²³ Munk Olsen, L’étude des auteurs classiques latins vol. 4.1, 79-83.
Commentary B\textsuperscript{124} (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Auct. F.6.9-I) is thought to be a product of the school of St Victor in Paris, and was most likely a commentary on all of the \textit{Saturae}, although today it goes only as far as \textit{Sat} 16.37; commentary P (Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 2904-IX) is sometimes attributed to William of Conches, or else more loosely attributed to the school of Chartres, and covers satires 1-5 and the beginning of satire 6. Two shorter commentaries are related to these, but are significantly different in much of their content. W (Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery, W.20), is a simpler, shorter version of P that was written in the form of marginal and interlinear glosses in a twelfth-century French manuscript. W covers only the first two satires, and was probably aimed at a less experienced audience than P. The last commentary, which Löfstedt calls Bern, is based on two manuscripts, one a partially damaged example from late twelfth-century France (Bern, Burgerbibliothek, 666) the other a slightly later complete commentary whose text is very close to it (Bern, Burgerbibliothek, A 61). Bern is related to commentary B, and glosses continue through the entire text of the \textit{Saturae}. Bern’s glosses are often more concise renditions of the glosses given in B.

These twelfth-century commentaries demonstrate the wide variety of interpretive practices teachers could use in their classrooms. The longer commentaries, B and P, are aimed at students of different levels; while B performs the familiar function of replacing

\textsuperscript{124} I will be using the names or letters Löfstedt assigns to each commentary. All of the information given below can be found in Löfstedt, \textit{Juvenal-Kommentare}, vi; see also Munk Olsen, (same as note above).
complex Latin syntax or vocabulary with simpler syntax, or Latin synonyms, P includes a variety of scientific explanations and mythological references, as well as analyses of Juvenal’s writing style which gesture towards the rhetorical turn that would gradually eclipse the traditional auctores curriculum by the thirteenth century. In other words, B is aimed at a lower level than P. This means that P can sometimes avoid glossing the more explicit sexual references by focusing on formal aspects of the text, while B ends up explaining almost every one. Although W repeats some of P’s explanations, it does so in a much briefer format, in simpler language, leaving out the more extensive scientific explanations, and covers only the first two satires, suggesting that it was aimed at students who were building an initial familiarity with the auctores rather than those seeking an in-depth analysis.\textsuperscript{125} Similarly, Bern often gives simpler versions of the explanations provided in B. There is also a fair amount of overlap between the B and P commentaries themselves, which demonstrates that all four commentaries are participating in a well-established tradition, so that teachers had access to a number of common sources which they supplemented with their own explanations.

3.9 Boys, sex and society in Juvenal

Juvenal’s satires are a savage critique of the Roman morals of the early second century, focusing especially on the social and sexual behaviour of urban men. While Juvenal

\textsuperscript{125} It is quite common for the first few books of a school text to be the most heavily glossed.
devotes one long satire to women’s faults, most of the fifteen other satires find fault with men’s behaviour, and he is especially concerned with the moral decay of urban Roman masculinity. For Juvenal, a major symbol of this decay is widespread effeminacy and sex between men, which he often pathologizes as a disease or contagion. Juvenal’s hyperbolic, often ironic description of the many social and sexual horrors of Rome was read in medieval classrooms as a factual account of life during the reign of Nero.¹²⁶ As I discussed in the previous chapter, medieval teachers considered sexual vice, especially sodomy, a central theme of Juvenal’s work, and mentioned it in a variety of accessus. While Statius’ Achilleid and Terence’s Eunuchus highlighted the attractive and volatile qualities of adolescent boys, including their ability to perform a variety of genders, those texts and their medieval glosses mostly avoid allusions to pederasty. Juvenal, on the other hand, specifically identifies adolescent boys as a group vulnerable to sexual predation by grown men: a spoliator pupilli defrauds his teenage wards of their money and forces them into prostitution (Sat. 1.46), a Greek corruptor spares no member of the family, not even a boy ante pudicus [chaste until then] (Sat. 3.111), and the parents of a beautiful boy will sell their child for sex at the right price – and even if they manage not to, his beauty heightens his risk of being raped by someone like Nero (Sat 10.299-309).

¹²⁶ Modern scholars themselves have trouble establishing the exact dates of the satires, and do so based on a few datable events mentioned in individual satires, most of which occur during late first century or early second century CE (later than the reign of Nero). Medieval readers probably associated the text with Nero because he is mentioned in several satires, and because other sources, such as Suetonius, associate Nero with illicit sexual acts and general luxuria.
The medieval glosses to these sections of the text simply reiterate the ideas presented in the base text, with little elaboration, suggesting that these situations are plausible to the reader.

Juvenal highlights the ways in which sexual practices can spread through male social networks. This is especially relevant to adolescents, whose pliable nature and weak intellect makes them susceptible to *luxuria*. Juvenal and his medieval commentators often use the language of teaching, learning and schools to describe the propagation of illicit sexualities and the implications of such sexualities for male adolescents.

The verb “*docere*” [to teach] is used in several contexts to suggest that innovative sexual practices can spread through social networks, and from one culture to another. P explains that prostitution did not exist in Rome until Syrians arrived there, and “*docuerunt eos habere prostibula*” [taught them to have prostitutes]; the commentator’s alternative explanation is that Syrians brought prostitutes with them, who then taught other women their trade.\(^\text{127}\) The commentator identifies two ways that prostitution can be spread, aligned with gendered social networks which facilitate homosocial teaching: the Syrian men teach “*eos*”, while the prostitutes teach “*alias*”. Commentary B explains

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\(^{127}\) Vel potest, quod secum advexerunt mulieres, quas prostare faciebant iuxta teatrum; ill[a]e alias docuerunt ad modum earum facere. [Or it is possible that the Syrians brought women with them, whom they made prostitute themselves next to the theatre; and these women taught other women their way of doing things. Löfstedt, *Juvenal-Kommentare*, 282 (glossing Sat 3.65).]
how illicit sexual practices can also spread through homosocial networks at court, when Crispinus, an Egyptian fisherman, is elevated to the rank of senator by Nero.128 According to the commentator, Egyptians are known for their exotic sexual practices, and Nero brings Crispinus to court “ut doceret eum nova genera libidinis” [so that he (Crispinus) could teach him (Nero) new kinds of lust].129

Juvenal and his medieval commentators share a long tradition of associating cultural “others” with sexual depravity; what is more notable here is that the commentators’ stance suggests a model of socially constituted sexuality. The idea that sexuality can be learned has obvious echoes to my discussions in the last chapter of Ovid’s “rules” for love, which help to stabilize unruly desire, and the implications of mislearning those rules as depicted by Alan of Lille. In the cases drawn from Juvenal above, the “learning” taking place was relatively informal, but there are many other instances where Juvenal and his commentators make closer links between formal schooling and illicit sexual acts, implicating both adolescents and their teachers.

128 This is the story told in B. Juvenal merely mentions Crispinus as a decadent Egyptian in Domitian’s court, and calls him “verna” (a household slave). (Sat 1.26-7).

129 Löfstedt, Juvenal-Kommentare, 10. The commentator further notes “Egiptii incognita nobis genera libidinis exercent” [Egyptians exhibit passions of a kind unknown to us].
3.10 The school for sodomy

B: In hac prima\textsuperscript{130} satира redarguit viciosos doctores et iudices populi, qui cum alios bona doctrina et exemplo bone conversacionis illuminare deberent et ad morum honestatem provocare, nesciunt, quid debeant adnunciare, speciem sapientie aliunde sibi adquirentes. Et preterea, si quando bonum adnuntient, eorum mala vita totum offuscat. Unde fit, ut in contemptum veniant. Et notat de non naturalibus viciis.\textsuperscript{131}

[In this first satire, Juvenal attacks lecherous teachers and judges who, although they should enlighten others with good instruction and provide an example of good conversation and encourage others to live a virtuous life, do not know what they are supposed to be teaching, instead gaining a different kind of knowledge for themselves. Moreover, if ever they do teach something good, the bad quality of their life obscures it entirely. For this reason they are despised. And Juvenal remarks upon unnatural vices.]

This summary of Satire 2 combines a number of striking features of medieval approaches to teaching Juvenal. Most obvious is the commentator’s use of contemporary terms to identify the men in question: while Juvenal’s satire talks about judges and politicians who pretend to be virtuous or Stoical but are secretly sodomites, B adds in “viciosos doctores” whose duties are closely aligned with those of medieval clerics and teachers. This is hardly surprising, as many of the reforming diatribes of the eleventh- and twelfth-century church have a great deal in common with Juvenal’s critiques. The commentator then explains that these “doctores” have acquired their knowledge from the wrong sources, and are thus unable to carry out their duties,

\textsuperscript{130} B refers to Satire 1 as a “proemium” (Löfstedt, \textit{Juvenal-Kommentare}, 6), which is why this summary of Satire 2 refers to it as the first satire. This idea is common to several medieval commentaries on Juvenal; see Estrella Perez Rodriguez, “Reading Juvenal in the Twelfth Century” \textit{Journal of Medieval Latin} 17 (2007), 239.

alluding to the idea that failure to learn proper behaviour has serious social consequences. The last brief mention of “unnatural vices” completes the commentator’s sketch of the theme of this satire, and heavily implies that expertise in sodomy is the knowledge these “doctores” have acquired. These initial links between teaching, learning and sodomy run through many of the medieval glosses to the satires.

Teachers, as role models for their students, do not keep this knowledge to themselves, but influence their young charges as well. Glosses to the phrase “praetextatus adulter” [teenage adulterer]¹³² (Sat 1.78) attribute a young man’s adultery to lax schooling:

**B:** Pretexta est talaris vestis et rubea, qua utebantur filii nobilium tantum, dum erant in scolis; et tunc magistros hæbebant, ne aliquid illicitum facerent. Sed modo tanta luxuria erat, quod pretextati mechabantur.¹³³

[Pretexta is a long, red garment worn only by sons of nobles, while they were in school; and at that time they had teachers so that they would not do anything untoward. But now there was so much luxuria that boys wearing the praetexta were adulterers.]

**W:** Pretexita est genus i ndumenti, quo soli nobilium filii utebantur, dum erant in studio. In hoc notat illos et magistros eorum, quia in tempore, quo debebant studere sapientie, studebant luxurie.¹³⁴

[Pretexta is a kind of clothing which only the sons of nobles wore, while they were in school. Here he censures them and their teachers, because they were studying luxuria when they should have been learning wisdom.]

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¹³³ Löfstedt, *Juvenal-Kommentare*, 17

¹³⁴ Löfstedt, *Juvenal-Kommentare*, 339
These glosses are particularly interesting because the section of Satire 1 in question makes no mention of teachers, or of schools. The phrase “praetextatus adulter” occurs as part of a long list of examples of debauched Roman behaviour, including effeminacy, incest, husbands acting as pimps for their wives, and other varieties of infamia. But the medieval commentators have correctly understood that the toga praetexta was worn by Roman adolescents, and extrapolate that this toga was for “filii nobilium” who should be in school. These glosses neatly summarize the medieval anxiety that impressionable adolescents might “study” luxuria and sexual impropriety instead of their lessons.

The B commentator’s observation that adolescents needed teachers “ne aliquid illicitum facerent” [so that they did not do anything untoward] may be alluding to Juvenal’s description of a teacher’s duties in Satire 7. Juvenal is quite explicit about the potential for sexual contact between boys in the classroom, and the teacher’s responsibility to curtail any such activities. He describes the miserable life of the woefully underpaid Roman grammaticus, including the exorbitant demands of parents, who expect him to have obscure facts about the auctores at his fingertips, and take the time to shape his students’ mores as if he were shaping their faces out of wax (that most familiar of

135 This same phrase is also used in the stanza of Walter of Châtillon’s poem quoted above, implying that the poem is informed not only by Juvenal’s text, but probably by the commentary tradition as well.
metaphors) (*Sat. 7.215-243*). He is also required to supervise the students’ unruly sexual behaviour (*Sat. 7.239-242*):

[...] *exigite ut sit*
*et pater ipsius coetus, ne turpia ludant,*
*ne faciant vicibus. non est leve tot puerorum*
*observare manus oculosque in fine trementis.*

[Require that he take the father’s role in that scrum, ensuring that they don’t play dirty games and don’t take turns with one another. It is no light thing to keep a watch on all those boys with their hands and eyes quivering till they come.]

This is one instance where B and Bern take markedly different approaches in their interpretation of Juvenal’s text. Bern focuses on describing the teacher’s disciplinary techniques, rather than giving a detailed explanation of the boys’ behaviour: the commentator notes that the teacher prevents any dirty games “*colafizando*” [by means of boxing their ears].

136 B, on the other hand, provides a detailed explanation of the specific disciplinary problem in question, glossing “*vicibus*” with “*ne se invicum corrumpant*” [so that they do not seduce/ruin one another], “*trementes*” with “*nutantes ex libidine*” [shaking with lust], and “*in fine*” with “*scilicet coitus*” [that is, (the end) of coitus].

137 The B commentator clearly wants to ensure that his students have a full understanding of Juvenal’s description of the effects of adolescent lust in the classroom, either *ad cautelam* or because it alluded to familiar circumstances.


137 Löfstedt, *Juvenal-Kommentare*, 120.
The examples above have demonstrated a strain of discourse in the medieval reading of Juvenal which constructs many sexual acts, including sodomy, as learned. While some sections of the text and glosses refer more broadly to enculturation through social networks, in several others the school itself is identified as a site of male anxiety and regulation for the sexuality of boys. The most intriguing link between teaching and sodomy occurs in B’s glosses to Juvenal, and involves the term “praeceptor aliorum” [a teacher of others, or a teacher of other topics], which B uses in two related contexts.

Glossing the same passage as discussed above (Sat 7.239–242), B provides the following explanation for Juvenal’s use of “pater”:

Ad magistrum potest referri, qui ut pater discipulos bonis moribus instruit; vel ad filium, qui, licet magistro pauca det, vult tamen patrem esse et preceptorem aliorum.¹³⁸

[This can refer to the teacher, who teaches his students good mores, like a father; or it can refer to the son who, although he pays the teacher little, nevertheless wants to be the father and the teacher of others].

The first part of the gloss is an explanation of the parental role as performed by teachers, a commonplace trope in medieval pedagogical literature, the discussion of which allows the commentator to avoid any double-entendre in Juvenal’s “pater ipsius coetus”.¹³⁹ The second part of the gloss is more difficult to understand, and seems to

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¹³⁸ Löfstedt, Vier Juvenal-Kommentare, 120.

¹³⁹ “Coetus”, rendered by Braund as “scrum”, can mean a crowd or meeting, or it can refer to sexual intercourse as a variant of “coitus”. See J.N. Adams, The Latin Sexual Vocabulary (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982, 179).
allude to the power dynamics driving the teacher-student relationship, especially for a household tutor – although the son is nominally in the teacher’s power, the student is paying him, so the student is in a sense his boss (a situation which is familiar to many precariously employed academics in the present day). Another possibility is that this refers to the cyclical nature of “pederastic insemination” I discussed in Chapter One, whereby children who are beaten and dominated at school grow up to become schoolmasters and dominate others in turn.

If we read “pater ipsius coetus” (with the double-entendre) with “ne faciant vicibus” in the base text – the teacher must play the dominant role so that the children will not take turns being the pedicator (an interpretation akin to Adams’)\(^\text{140}\) – the commentator’s observation that the boy wishes to be the “pater” and “preceptor aliorum” may refer to the boy’s wish to penetrate his fellow students. The implications of “preceptor aliorum” are made clearer with reference to an earlier gloss in the B commentary. At Sat 2.9-10, Juvenal attacks men who pretend to be virtuous, but are secretly sodomites:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{[...]} & \quad \text{castigas turpia, cum sis} \\
& \quad \text{inter Socraticos notissima fossa cinaedos?}
\end{align*}
\]

[Do you criticise disgusting behaviour when you yourself are the most notorious digging-hole among Socratic pathics?]

\(^{140}\) Adams, *Latin Sexual Vocabulary*, 166 n2.
B’s glosses, as is typical for this commentary, explain the implications of the text in a fairly straightforward way:\(^{141}\)

**fossa**, id est inmundicia. **cinedos**, id est inmunde viventes. [...] Vel “fossa”, id est ‘receptaculum omnium sordium’. Vel ‘aliorum preceptor’. Socrates aliquando fertur male vixisse; inde dicitur “inter Socraticos”.\(^{142}\)

[fossa, that is, uncleanness. cinedos, that is, people with a sordid lifestyle. Or “fossa”, that is, ‘a receptacle for all kinds of filth’. Or ‘a teacher of others’. Socrates is sometimes said to have lived wickedly, which is why it says “inter Socraticos”.]

This series of glosses manages to create a conceptual nexus within which sodomy, filth, vice and teaching are connected. The use of “aliorum preceptor” is especially intriguing, as it seems to assume that students would know what this expression meant without any further explanation – perhaps it was medieval Latin slang. Bern uses the same phrase, with even less context, as the sole gloss for these lines, saying “Castigas turpia, cum talis sis, id est fossa et preceptor aliorum” [You criticize vice, when you yourself are that kind of person, that is, a “fossa” and teacher of others].\(^{143}\) The fact that B provides “aliorum preceptor” alongside “receptaculum” suggests that the commentator may be contrasting “active” and “passive” roles in sex between men, as he does at Sat 2.50, where he explains that Juvenal’s reference to “both diseases” means “ille lector

\(^{141}\) Note that B in general is less likely to use “sodomiticus” and its variants, often opting for “paticus” or “lecator”, than P, which uses it often, so its absence here is not surprising. The explanation here is not necessarily euphemistic, but is attempting to address Juvenal’s choice of words.

\(^{142}\) Löfstedt, *Vier Juvenal-Kommentäre*, 27.

\(^{143}\) Löfstedt, *Vier Juvenal-Kommentäre*, 376.
morbo palleter agendo et patiendo”[that pervert turns pale from disease, by penetrating and receiving]. Another possibility is that the phrase does not refer to teaching another person, but echoes Ovid’s role as the “praecceptor amoris” in the Ars amatoria; this praecceptor, like the “viciosos doctores” mentioned earlier, has “other” fields of expertise.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated a number of approaches to adolescent sexuality and gender in twelfth-century school texts. Although the stories of Achilles and Chaerea might have allowed boys to participate in a fantasy of slipping unnoticed into all-female spaces, or imagine asserting power through rape, they also convey Greco-Roman ideas about the gender liminality of adolescent boys which stem from the notion that the androgyny, or femininity, of boys is linked to their role as sexual partners for men. The “unrationalized coexistence” of these ideas in texts which have travelled over time to the medieval classroom means that certain aspects of adolescent gender-fluidity, such as the beauty of the boys in their disguises, persist in the readings given by medieval commentators, creating a space for queer possibilities. The possibility of slippage between genders is highlighted by the boys’ relative ease in adopting appropriate

\footnote{144} Glossing “Hispo subit iuvenes et morbo palleter utroque”[Hispo submits to young men and turns pale from both diseases]. Löfstedt, Juvenal-Kommetare, 30.

\footnote{145} Sedgwick, Epistemology of the Closet, 47.
gender performances, and by the alternation of gendered pronouns by the 
commentator. The role of other social actors in reinforcing or curtailing these 
performances becomes increasingly important as the plots advance: Achilles’ life as a 
girl, enabled by Thetis’ instruction and Deidamia’s complicity, is put to an abrupt end 
by Ulysses; Chaerea is aided by Parmeno but eventually found out by Thais the meretrix 
and her maid, and his father has to intervene on his behalf. The social nature of 
gendered sexuality is also explored in Juvenal’s satires: not only does Juvenal 
demonstrate that sexual habitus can be transmitted through homosocial networks, he 
relates this notion directly to adolescents and the homosocial networks which comprise 
schooling.

Juvenal’s text makes a much more explicit link between adolescence and pederasty (or 
sodomy in general) than either the Achilleid or Eunuchus, but all three texts contain 
related themes, including the notion that adolescent gender-fluidity is attractive and 
that adolescents can learn to perform a variety of gendered and sexual behaviours. 
Juvenal’s negative stance on these issues contrasts with that of the Achilleid and 
Eunuchus – in the latter two works gender slippage does not result in sexual deviancy, 
but in rape, which is illicit but normalised. But Juvenal’s text allows sex between men to 
occupy substantial space in the classroom, and through medieval commentators 
sodomy is given a name and social context, entering the student’s everyday language 
rather than remaining unspeakable. Serlo of Wilton (1110-1181) demonstrates that
Juvenal’s text could be queerly repurposed in a poem which uses the names Naevolus and Hispo to denote two male lovers. Naevolus is a client who has sex with both his patron and his patron’s wife (on separate occasions), whom Juvenal describes with derision in Satire 9, and Hispo is described as diseased because he not only penetrates boys but allows them to penetrate him (Sat 2.50). Serlo’s poem demonstrates that readers of Juvenal could reframe the author’s depictions of debauched sodomites in order to explore notions of love and sex between men in a more positive way. This seems to be exactly the kind of shift in meaning Alan of Lille warns against when he speaks of the play between vitium and tropus, and the combined perspectives of Statius, Terence and Juvenal demonstrate a number of directions in which the rules of gendered and sexual grammar can be stretched by adolescents and their teachers.

\footnote{Stehling, *Medieval Latin Poems*, 79. The poem is also set in Paris, where Serlo studied and taught for many years.}
Conclusion

At school they taught me how to be
So pure in thought, and word, and deed;
They didn’t quite succeed...

-- Pet Shop Boys, “It’s a Sin”¹

This dissertation has demonstrated a variety of connections between medieval notions of teaching, learning, and sexuality which are intertwined with the process of formal education in the socially formative environment of twelfth-century schools. I have suggested that it is plausible that sexuality becomes a topic of discussion in the twelfth-century classroom through its inclusion in the “ethical” (or behavioural) education in mores, a widely recognized aspect of medieval schooling. Bringing sex into the classroom allows for a process of standardization and stabilization of the desires, persons, and acts implicated in sexuality, sometimes described as learned components of a social performance, as I discussed in chapters Two and Three. But this approach simultaneously reveals latent contradictions and instabilities in both the process of teaching and the regulatory efficiency of the “rules” themselves, because learning does not always imply a complete transfer of knowledge or perfect copy of the original, and rules themselves can be subject to interpretation and productive of variation. The unstable nature of teaching, and that of socially learned performances, is a matter of special concern for medieval adolescent students, a “liminal” group which lacks a well-defined social role, as I showed in Chapter Three. Adolescent boys were considered

¹ Pet Shop Boys, Actually (Parlophone, 1987).
mentally and physically fragile, because they did not possess the fully developed rationality and stable gendered sexual identification of adult men. This resulted in a particular cultural anxiety which linked notions of learning, adolescence, formal schooling, and illicit sex between men (sodomy). If boys learned the wrong moral and sexual *habitus* during this critical time, they would have difficulty performing as socially functional men in the future.

The notion that medieval schoolbooks and teaching materials can frame sexuality as performative, or as socially constructed, might seem an unduly postmodern reading at first glance. In fact, many medieval social rituals involve a conscious performance which acknowledges social boundaries, in formal settings both at court and within the church. Conduct manuals, which gained popularity from the twelfth century onward and were aimed mainly at young men and women at court, codified social scripts and proper behaviour in a variety of situations. The “ethical” reading of schoolbooks had a similar function, but a broader scope because of the wide variety of behaviours depicted in the *auctores* and the multivalent classroom interpretation which combined grammatical and moral education. While sometimes presenting orderly, conscious performances of gendered sexuality, like the rules of the *Ars* or the careful preparation Achilles requires to act as a girl, the *auctores* also present more unruly, deviant, or queer performances, especially in the satires, which draw attention to the dynamic nature of social performativity.
This discourse around the social implications of sexuality runs alongside many others, in twelfth-century schoolbooks themselves and in medical, religious and legal settings. The medieval discourses on the “natural” and the strains of discourse identified here seem in some contexts to be widely divergent. Sodomy (in all its forms) put special pressure on the medieval notion of the natural because it was not the result of obviously “monstrous” or deformed bodies, was thought to be quite common, and evoked pleasure superficially similar to that of licit or natural couplings. While sex between men was routinely referred to as contra naturam [against nature] in a wide variety of contexts, later Aristotelian philosophers like Albert the Great (1200-1280) and Peter of Abano (1257-1316) struggled to explain how some men could “naturally diverge from nature”.\(^2\) Although both argue that these men are “naturally” inclined to have sex with men due to physical deformities or humoural makeup, they also preserve a remnant of the social-sexual discourse I have presented here. The (pseudo-)Aristotelian Problemata asserts that pubescent boys can become accustomed to “being subjected” (or, as Peter of Abano explains, “subjected and rubbed around the anus”) so that the memory of the pleasure they experience leads them to seek out this experience again and again, and it

becomes a habit which shares features with inborn or natural desires. This reflects a very similar mixture of concerns about the fragility of adolescent minds and bodies as those in our school texts and commentaries, but these later texts are much less explicit about exactly how this habit is formed (in what circumstances do these acts occur? who is “subjecting” and rubbing whom? etc).

The texts presented in Chapter Three depict adolescents in various sexual circumstances, and I have demonstrated the ways in which these texts and their medieval commentaries embody both Roman and medieval anxieties about adolescent gender and sexuality. But what is the significance of giving these texts to adolescents themselves to read and memorize? As discussed in Chapter One, medieval teachers and students acknowledged that reading the auctores could evoke troubling desires and emotions. While texts depicting foolish or rash adolescents may have functioned ad cautelam, to warn boys about the dangers associated with their “slippery” age, they also encouraged medieval adolescent students to think of themselves as liminal. This served in part to reinforce the importance of the regulatory and self-monitoring practices which were central to Christian doctrine on the sexuality of the clergy, by instilling a mistrust of self (both in terms of rationality and the physical body) at an early age. But

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3 Cadden, Nothing Natural is Shameful, 81-2. Whether the men who have a “natural” predisposition towards sodomy are different in terms of their desire for “active” or “passive” roles from those who develop it as a habit is also the subject of debate in late-medieval Aristotelian discourse (see Cadden, Nothing Natural is Shameful, 83-97).
these texts may also have given boys an outlet for sexual impulses and emotions which was vital to their social development. As many scholars have noted, legal sources and penitentials often had lesser penalties for sexual offenses by adolescents, implying that some sexual misbehaviour was expected. Adolescent liminality gave students license to explore ideas and feelings which were off-limits to adults – parallel to the position of the auctores themselves, which Jerome insisted were a necessity for young men but a sinful pleasure for adults.

The school thus became a site not only for the regulation and classification of sexuality, but a space in which sexual nefanda could be discussed and imagined, if only temporarily. The “unmentionable vice” was given a name and was discussed in connection with a number of social contexts and varieties of masculinity, and other sexual desires, acts, objects and emotions were also evoked and named. While many of these discussions were embedded in a framework of judgment or of rules which identified whether these aspects of sexuality were licit, illicit, troublesome or pleasurable, students gained a set of words and concepts surrounding sexuality which they could use to make their own judgments and tell their own stories. Many texts

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emerging from twelfth-century schools demonstrate a playfulness in blending classical language and motifs with contemporary sexual *mores*, like the poem by Serlo discussed in Chapter Three. These texts suggest that students bonded with one another through shared readings and rewritings of sexuality in the *auctores*.

The connections between schooling, literacy and sexuality outlined in this dissertation demonstrate the value of examining school texts and commentaries as documents of culture. The twelfth century produced a vast body of commentary on the *auctores*, but most of this tradition has never been edited or subjected to serious study, even in the context of grammar alone. This dissertation has shown that these texts constitute a fascinating and complex body of evidence for the history of sexuality, one which has barely been explored.
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