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Producing the *Lector*

Rita Copeland

Medieval grammatical curricula did not treat all authors alike: the prestige conferred on the *auctor* was determined by the functions that various texts served in the curriculum. This paper attempts a fine-tuned account of the progression to those classical and medieval works that represented the transition to the “literary” in its own right. What features of critical analysis characterized the approaches to those works considered advanced literary fare, such as certain kinds of stylistic analysis, attention to historical or generic concerns, or theoretical approaches to language? Ultimately what defines that highest level of *auctor* is the production of the skills of the *lector*. This essay considers four canonical surveys from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries: works by Conrad of Hirsau, Alexander Neckam, and Hugh of Trimberg, and an early humanist guide to the *auctores*. As these treatises suggest, the most advanced authors demand, not imitators, but readers. This is the key critical lesson exported beyond the classroom to define authorial prestige – and authorial self-consciousness – in medieval literary culture.

The lists of authors left to us by schoolmasters contain no surprises about which authors they consider to be the most “advanced,” that is, the authors who demand the highest level of preparation and so have to be encountered after the bootcamp of Donatus’ *Ars minor* and the *Liber Catonianus* or similar initiatory works. While no two curricular surveys are the same, the core ideas remain fixed: Virgil or Horace are harder than the *Ecloga* of Theodulus or the *Dicticha Catonis*. But while we have a fairly secure notion of the order in which authors would be read, there remain more questions we can ask about how they distinguished elementary from advanced fare: that is, those texts that served the acquisi-

tion of literacy (the texts comprising the so-called *Liber Catonianus*¹) as opposed to those classical, late classical, and medieval works that represented the transition to “literature” in its own right. Medieval grammatical curricula did not treat all authors alike: the prestige conferred on the *auctor* was determined by the function that a text served in the curriculum. What features of critical analysis characterized the approaches to those texts considered advanced literary fare, what formal principles and historical or theoretical assumptions did they bring to the category of “advanced” authors? How are different “levels” of author marked as subjects of critical interpretation? Exactly what kinds of critical knowledge were students meant to take away from these authors? And most important, if also most difficult to assess: what kind of reader and what kind of reading does a curriculum of advanced authors assume?

Here I will focus on four “reading lists” and their understandings of the “advanced” *auctores*: Conrad of Hirsau’s *Dialogus super auctores* (from no later than the middle of the twelfth century, and possibly decades earlier), Alexander Neckam’s list of authors in his *Sacerdos ad altare* (from around 1210), Hugh of Trimberg’s *Registrum multorum auctorum* (from about 1280), and a collection of epitomes of classical and medieval works, written after 1450, in London, British Library MS Cotton Titus D.XX.

The assumptions that governed the “orders of reading” in curricular surveys will prove to be quite different from the approaches familiar to us from the medieval compositional treatises known as the *artes poetriae*, which also advocate certain authors as “exemplary” and even elevate their works to “masterpiece” status. We may be accustomed to classifying manuals of poetic composition together with curricular surveys, for good reasons: the two kinds of treatise overlap with each other in their coverage of the classical and medieval literary curriculum, so that we might view them as different forms of the same thing: introductions to the *auctores*.² But their investments in a notion of canonical “authorship” are in fact very different. If Gervase of Melkley, writing his *Ars versificaria* in about the year 1215, declared Bernardus Silvestris to be “a parrot in prose and a nightingale in verse” (Gräbener 1) this evaluation has a different tenor than comparable praise of an ancient or medieval author in a curricular survey. For grammatical curricula articulate another

¹ The stable elements of the *Liber catonianus* were the *Disticha Catonis*, Theodulus, Avianus’ fables, Maximianus (*Elegia*), Statius (*Achilleid*), and Claudian (*De raptu Proserpinae*). See Woods and Copeland 380-84.

² Perhaps influentially, Curtius (48-54) treats Eberhard the German’s *Laborintus* as the same kind of text as Conrad of Hirsau’s *Dialogus super auctores* in his discussion of “Curriculum Authors.”

evaluative standard for what makes an *auctor*. What defines the highest level of authorship is how it produces the skills of the *lector*. The most advanced authors demand, not imitators, but readers.

From its beginnings in antiquity, grammatical teaching was both descriptive and prescriptive. It used the authors to establish good norms for reading, but also to provide models of style and grammatical usage for those learning how to write. The two were intimately linked, as we know from Servius' commentary on Virgil, which both explores textual meaning and shows how Virgil's style works, that is, why a phrase can be turned to good effect. When he is in prescriptive mode, Servius gives both grammatical and stylistic instruction.

[At *Aeneid* line 2] ITALIAM ars quidem hoc exigit, ut nominibus provinciarum praepositiones addamus, civitatum numquam. Tamen plerumque perverso ordine lectum est; nam ecce hoc loco detraxit provinciae praepositionem dicens "Italiam venit" *pro ad Italiam venit*.³ Tullius in Verrinis ea die Verres ad Messanam venit *pro Messanam venit*. Sane sciendum est usurpari ab auctoribus, ut vel addant vel detrahant praepositiones; namque ait Vergilius silvis te, Tyrrhene, feras agitare putasti *pro in silvis*. Ut ergo illic detraxit loco praepositionem, sic hic provinciae. Et est figura.

(Thilo and Hagen 1: 7-8)

italiam ["<to> italy"] The art [of grammar] requires that we add prepositions to the names of provinces, but never to those of cities. Yet we often read the reverse. For, look, here he left out the preposition with a province *Italiam venit* instead of *ad Italiam venit* "he came to Italy." Tully in the Verrine orations: "on that day Verres came *ad Messanam*" instead of *Messanam* "to Messana." Know that it belongs to the usage of the *auctores* to either add or omit prepositions. For Virgil says *silvis* "Did you think, Tyrrhenian, that you were hunting the wild animals in the woods [*silvis*]?" instead of *in silvis*. So just as he omitted the preposition there with the word indicating a place, so he omitted it here with the province. This is a figure of speech.

(Copeland and Sluiter 130-1)

It is for this reason that poetry was the particular object of choice for grammatical analysis: the explanation of language could go hand in hand with stylistic notes on the *auctores* to instruct students about composition (Copeland and Sluiter 62-71). Even a commentary that is less fulsome than Servius' on the *Aeneid*, and far less interested in grammatical usage, seems to combine the two approaches: Lactantius Placidus on the *Thebaid* is given to many comments on Statius' style (the figures and tropes)

³ In editions of Servius it is conventional to italicize those passages representing the expanded "Servius Danielis" tradition.

and continually refers the reader back to Virgil, Horace, Cicero and other *auctores* to illustrate the richness of stylistic precedent on which Statius builds (Sweeney vii and *passim*).

These objectives remained closely linked through the Middle Ages in terms of the teaching practices of grammar masters. The richest commentaries that represent higher levels of lecturing on the *auctores* show us how teachers continued to combine grammatical interests, literary understanding, and stylistic notes that could be applied to composition. But at some point, probably about the middle of the twelfth century, these functions also seem to have separated into more specialized strands, producing two distinctive kinds of treatises dealing with what we moderns would call the literary “canon,” one strand taking the canonical authors as objects of imitation, and the other strand focusing on the notion of a canon itself.⁴ I doubt that this apparent separation of functions has more profound causes than the increasing specialization of teaching interests in the changing environment of twelfth century schools.

The first of these strands is the arts of poetry, which emerged as a new preceptive genre in the middle or late twelfth century with Matthew of Vendôme’s *Ars versificatoria*. These new arts took a consolidated approach to composition, combining practical advice on how to generate a text with examples from typically classical – and sometimes contemporary – works to illustrate stylistic strategies that a student might imitate. But for the most part they did not take it as a main object to establish norms of reading, even if their compositional teaching was predicated on a certain consensus about what should be read. Only one of the *artes poetriae*, Eberhard the German’s *Laborintus*, ventures into the curricular territory, and its exceptionalism will provide a useful point of comparison in the argument that follows.

The question of curricular consensus – what makes the canon as a whole, and how should it be read – seems to become the property of the second specialized strand of grammatical treatise: surveys of curricular authors, the earliest of which, Conrad’s *Dialogues super auctores*, dates from the middle of the twelfth century. This second strand does not appear to be a big tradition, and the texts that I am going to discuss do not seem to have circulated extensively (nothing like the vast influence of the *artes poetriae*).⁵ Normative canonical lists are not completely new

⁴ In its early uses, the term “canon” applied to a catalogue of sacred writings. Only in the eighteenth century was the term first used in philology to apply to secular literary history. See Curtius, 256n.

⁵ The *Dialogus super auctores* is known to its editor in only three manuscripts (Huygens 10-17); Neckam’s *Sacerdos ad altare* survives in one copy; the *Registrum multorum auctorum* sur-

with the twelfth century: they are as old as grammatical pedagogy itself, and we find incipient versions of curricular surveys in earlier medieval accounts of schooling: for example, the *Libellus scholasticus* of Walter of Speyer (late tenth century), which is a poetic reminiscence of educational ascent from infancy to the higher stages of learning (ed. Vossen; see Curtius, 49).⁶ But the later curricular treatises mark a decisive turn, because they are dedicated survey texts, suggesting that the literary curriculum is an autonomous and impersonal field of knowledge. These new works seem to have been responding to a certain perceived need. In this they sum up the outlooks of generations of teachers and readers about the canon as an institution in itself and about progression through the *auctores*. To be sure, the surveys are related to the larger medieval tradition of literary *accessus ad auctores*, and in some cases borrow directly from them. But they are different from the *accessus* in trying to grasp and structure an approach to the literary tradition as a whole rather than just to individual authors. And it is the question of the approach to the canon as a whole that I want to try to understand here.

Conrad of Hirsau's *Dialogus super auctores* can set the stage for us. It is the earliest of the curricular surveys, and thanks to the excellent edition by Huygens and the lucid translation of substantial sections by Minnis and Scott, probably the best known. It introduces twenty one authors from Donatus, Cato, the Latin fabulists, some of the scriptural versifiers of late antiquity, and Theodulus to a group that he calls the "Roman authors" presumably because of their shared *romanitas*, whether Christian or pagan (Whitbread 244):

M. Veniamus nunc ad romanos auctores Aratorem, Prudentium, Tullium, Salustium, Boetium, Lucanum, Virgilium et Oratium modernorum studiis usitatos, quia veterum auctoritas multis aliis, id est historiographis, tragedis, comicis, musicis usa probatur, quibus certis ex causis moderni minime utuntur.

D. Causam huius rei scire cupio.

M. Teste Prisciano grammatico et nonnullis aliis multi gentilium libri christiana tempora precesserunt, in quibus antiqui studia sua contriverunt, quae non recipit nec approbat nunc ecclesia, quia facile respuitur vana et falsa doctrina ubi incipiunt clarescere divina. (Huygens 95.735-45)

Master. Now we come to the Roman authors Arator, Prudentius, Tully, Salust, Boethius, Virgil, and Horace, who are familiar in the studies of mod-

vives in five manuscripts (Langosch 130-7); Cotton Titus D XX is the unique source of the collection of epitomes.

⁶ Walter refers to Virgil, the Latinized Homer, Martianus Capella, Horace, Persius, Juvenal, Boethius, Statius, Terence, and Lucan.

erns, for the authority of the ancients valued by many others, i.e. writers of histories, tragedies, comedies, and musical works, is proven, [although] there are reasons why certain ones are read less by moderns.

D. I should like to know the reason for this.

M. As witnessed by Priscian the grammarian and various others, there were many books of the pagans that preceded the Christian era on which the ancients wasted their studies, and which the Church now does not recognize or approve, because where divine truths become evident, vain and false teaching is readily rejected.

While at this point in the treatise Conrad's list of "Roman" authors gives Arator, Prudentius, Tully (i.e. Cicero), Sallust, Boethius, Lucan, Virgil, and Horace (lines 735-9), the authors discussed and the actual order of treatment – not evenly distributed – are Arator, Prudentius, Tully, Sallust, Boethius, Lucan, Horace, Ovid, Terence, Juvenal, Homer (in Latinized reception), Persius, Statius, and Virgil (lines 749-1571). It is not made clear who those authors no longer much read by moderns and rejected by the Church might be: this category does not seem to fit the remaining six authors not listed but actually treated over the remaining course of the treatise, sometimes at length, i.e. Ovid, Terence, Juvenal, Homer, Persius, and Statius.

The treatise as a whole is broadly didascallic, drawing from eleventh- and twelfth-century predecessors, notably Bernard of Utrecht's commentary on the *Ecloga* of Theodulus, to introduce critical terms for textual study, set pagan writings against Christian, and give an overview of the liberal arts and its value for Christian study. Overall the progression of the treatment is clear, from the authors considered easiest to those recognized as hardest, and of course this follows what had become a fairly standard curricular sequence. It appears that the *romanitas* that the Christian authors Arator and Prudentius share with the pagan authors Tully, Sallust, Boethius, Lucan, Virgil, and Horace (and in fact with most of the authors treated in the remainder of the work) accords them the higher status of "advanced authors." But Conrad's survey actually has relatively little to say about *why* or *how* one author is harder than the next. There are a few comments on nobility of style sprinkled throughout the work, often derived from contemporary *accessus*. The only indication of how the progression is gaged is some increasing attention to complexity of thought or style. There is an extended appreciation of Lucan's high style invective and beautiful irony (110), which seems to verge on rhetorical advice (Wetherbee 125). Ultimately Virgil is recommended to the "knowing reader" who will see that the poet has mastered all the liberal arts (120.1507) and who will profit from discerning the exact nuance of Virgil's Latinity (121.1538). Presumably Virgil's

work fulfills the purpose of the technical precepts about literary study with which the treatise opens. In mastering Virgil's poetry one becomes truly a reader.

The context for Conrad's survey is the twelfth-century monastic school, in which reading itself, even reading the secular authors, is the preparation for a spiritual vocation. So it is not surprising here to see the canonical authors graded – however ambiguously – by the quality of readers they produce. But when we turn to Alexander Neckam's curricular list we have a much clearer set of formal and historical principles for the grouping of the *auctores*. Neckam's *Sacerdos ad altare* is one of his major grammatical works, named for its opening phase *Sacerdos ad altare accessurus* (a priest who is about to approach the altar). Basically it is a storehouse of the technical words for aspects of priestly, monastic, ecclesiastical, courtly, clerical, and scribal life, written in fairly straightforward prose so as to demonstrate how the words would be used. Its most likely audience would have been the students at the abbey school of Cirencester where Neckam became abbot a few years later, although it looks back to the world of the grammar schools where Neckam had taught earlier in his life.⁷ It works at a fairly advanced level, and culminates in a broad curricular survey which is encyclopedic in its scope, beginning with the literary education of grammar and then moving on to the scientific elements of the trivium, quadrivium, medicine, law, and theology. Overall the outlook is self-consciously (and rather proudly) professional, featuring Neckam's up-to-date knowledge of the most recent additions to scientific lore. The curricular survey opens with the acquisition of literacy and moves from there to the literary canon:

Postquam alphabetum didicerit et ceteris puerilibus rudimentis imbutus fuerit, Donatum et illud utile moralitatis compendium quod Catonis esse vulgus opinatur addiscat et ab Egloga Theodoli transeat ad egglogas Bucolicorum, prelectis tamen quibusdam libellis informationi rudium necessariis.⁸ Deinde satiricos et ystoriographos legat, ut vitia etiam in minori etate addiscat esse fugienda et nobilia gesta eorum desideret imitari. A Thebaide iocunda transeat ad divinam Eneida, nec negligat vatem quem Corduba genuit, qui non solum civilia bella describit sed et intestina. Juvenalis moralia dicta in archano pectoris reservet et flagitium nature summopere vitare studeat. Sermones Oratii et Epistolas legat et Poetiam et Odas cum libro Epodon. Elegias Nasonis et Ovidium Metamorfoseos audiat, sed et precipue libellum De remedio amoris familiarem habeat. Placuit tamen viris autenticis carmina amatoria cum satiris subducenda esse a manibus adolescentium, ac si eis dicatur, "Qui legitis flores et humi nascentia fraga / Frigidus,

⁷ On Neckam's biography and career, see R. W. Hunt; McDonough.

⁸ On this passage see Copeland, "Naming."

o pueri, fugite hinc, latet anguis in herba" [Virgil, *Eclogues* 3. 92-3]. Librum fastorum non esse legendum nonnullis placet. Staius Achilleidos etiam a viris multe gravitatis probatur. Bucolica Maronis et Georgica multe sunt utilitatis. Salustius et Tullius De oratore et Tuscanarum [sic] et De amicitia et De senectute et De fato multa commendatione digni sunt et Paradoxe. Liber inscriptus De multitudine deorum a quibusdam reprobatur. Tullius De officiis utilissimus est. Martialis cocus et Petronius multa continent in se utilia sed multa auditu indigna. Simachi breve genus dicendi admirationem parit. Solinum De mirabilibus mundi et Sydonium et Suetonium et Quintum Curtium et Trogium Pompeium et Crisippum et Titum Liphium commendo, sed Senecam ad Lucillum et De questionibus phisicis et De beneficiis relegere tibi utile censeas. Tragediam ipsius et Declamaciones legere non erit inutile. (T. Hunt 1: 269-70; cf. Haskins 90-2)

After he has learned the alphabet and has been instructed in other rudimentary matters suitable for children, let him learn Donatus and that useful compendium of moralities which common opinion attributes to Cato, and let him move on from the *Eclogue* of Theodulus to the eclogues of the *Bucolics*, however having read beforehand certain little books needful for the instruction of beginners. Then let him read the satirists and historians, so that while he is young he may learn what kinds of actions are to be avoided and what noble actions of heroes he should seek to imitate. From the delightful *Thebaid* let him pass to the divine *Aeneid*; but let him not neglect the poet born in Cordova [i.e. Lucan] who described not just civil wars but internecine conflict. Let him take to heart the moral sayings of Juvenal and let him studiously shun disgrace to the greatest extent of his nature. Let him read the *Satires* and *Epistles* of Horace, and the *Ars poetica* and the *Odes* and *Epodes*. Let him hear the "Elegies" [i.e. *Heroides*] of Naso and the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, but let him be especially familiar with the *Remedia amoris*. On the other hand it has pleased grown men that the song of love along with the satires be taken out of adolescent hands, as if it was said to them: "Ye who cull flowers and low-growing strawberries, away from here, lads; a chill snake lurks in the grass." Some people feel that the *Fasti* should not be read. Men have found Staius' *Achilleid* to be a most profound work. The *Bucolics* and *Georgics* of Virgilius Maro are very useful. The works of Sallust, and Tully's *De oratore* and *Tusculanae disputationes* and *De amicitia* and *De senectute* and *De fato* are worthy of much commendation, along with the *Paradoxa stoicorum*. Some disapprove of the book called *De multitudine deorum*. Tully's *De officiis* is most useful. Martial "Cocus" and Petronius contain much that is of use, but also much that is offensive to the ears. Symmachus' brevity is admirable. I commend Solinus' *De mirabilibus mundi*, and Sidonius, Suetonius, Quintus Curtius, Pompeius Trogius, Crisippus, and Titus Livius, but you may also think it worthwhile for you to reread Seneca's *Ad Lucilium* [*Epistulae morales*] and *De quaestionibus phisicis* and *De beneficiis*. It will not be useless to read his tragedy, and his *Declamaciones*.

(Copeland and Sluiter 536-7, with minor alterations)

Neckam's list clarifies what he considers advanced reading, because he marks it off from what constitutes elementary study (Donatus, Cato, Theodulus). The advanced fare is "literary," that is, the works can be described in terms of their literary affect (the "delightful" *Thebaid*, the "divine" *Aeneid*). The advanced reading is also primarily classical (which is not to say that he would not have considered Theodulus classical, but rather that a classical outlook generates the literary canon). In this way the survey looks back to the rather effete literary classicism of the Parisian and Orléannais schools of the twelfth century. The list may in fact reflect the influence of a classicizing florilegium which would provide names and material for this wide-ranging survey.

It is important to note that the order of the list does not follow the order of reading: Neckam tells us that students should first read the satirists and historians, even though the satirists and the historians do not open the list. But this apparent inconsistency can be taken as a sign that an immediate pedagogical directive (the order of reading for moral instruction) has yielded to another critical purpose, the grouping of texts according to genre and form. So the satirists and historians might be read first, because they are the obvious candidates for instilling good morals. But they do not lead off the classification scheme. While the genre groupings do not resemble modern genre taxonomies, there is an obvious interest here in demonstrating how certain kinds of works belong together because of their external form, or their matter, or both. Neckam's actual listing of authors begins with the most prestigious works: heroic poetry or *epos*, a classification familiar from ancient literary criticism and grammar. Thus the *Thebaid* ("delightful"), the *Aeneid* ("divine") and the *Pharsalia* lead off the list. Juvenal, Horace, and Ovid follow, in contiguity with each other, perhaps loosely linked by the theme of satire (thus also perhaps stressing the satirical strains in both Horace and Ovid). In the listing of the works of Horace and Ovid there seems to be another subordinate principle: the recognition of an *oeuvre* that, however heterogeneous in matter and form, is unified by reference to the author's name. Then follow the lesser works of Statius and Virgil (whose works fall so clearly into "major" and "minor" that the *oeuvres* can be broken up), then Sallust and Tully grouped together perhaps as prose writers, perhaps as political commentators, perhaps as both; then Martial and Petronius as satirical poets; then the long list of historians or sources of historical knowledge, and finally on his own, Seneca.

Even if Neckam's groupings are not taxonomically strict, they have a great deal to tell us about how a schoolmaster might approach the task of teaching what we call literary history. Indeed, we could go further to say that Neckam is inventing literary history here, or inventing a means for comprehending the canon in literary historical terms. The taxonomy

is a heuristic device which in itself teaches an approach to knowledge. The main organizational principles here are external form: verse and prose, long poem and short poem, and genre (here broadly conceived along medieval lines): fiction and history, morality and satire, political writing. The framing of the discussion indicates that these are the advanced authors, so there is no need for further insistence on their prestige.

Neckam's list is surprisingly similar to the reading list for a modern Ph.D. comprehensive exam on the American university model, designed to produce a reader who has a scientific mastery of a fixed subject. Such lists do not (deliberately) produce composers of poetry who will imitate the models before them. This is, indeed, a grammar of literary history, not a compositional rhetoric. Neckam's list achieves a remarkable effect. The subject of the list is literary history as a whole, not serial coverage of individual authors ranging from easy to hard. Thus the authors serve a purpose, not in themselves, but in terms of their function in a scientific system the principles of which can be grasped when the canon is laid out as a whole. In some respects the value of the list is greater than the combined value of authorial prestige, because the list holds the key to everything else. The critical idea that the reader is meant to take away will be of classification itself.

Hugh of Trimberg's *Registrum multorum auctorum*, from about 1280, is a schoolmaster's catalogue of incipits of poems, along with brief, informative statements about each work, in order to facilitate recognition when the student encounters the work in a collection.⁹ But quite apart from recognition of the texts themselves, it also encourages learning and remembering of literary history, rather like the old college outlines series which were intended to give easily memorized historical overviews. It is not really a curricular taxonomy in the manner of Neckam's, but rather a catalogue or a guide to reading (although it certainly assumes its own prescriptive force). But like Neckam, Hugh is very clear about which authors are to be considered advanced. The different levels of author – elementary, middling, and advanced – occupy different positions in his treatise, the structure of which he explains as follows:

⁹ For further discussion and sources, see Copeland and Sluiter 55-6, 550, and introduction to the selection from *Registrum multorum auctorum* 657-8.

Sic secundum ordinem locentur digniores, 350
 Ut in fine sedeant ethici minores!

Per maiores ethicos lectores inflati
 Possunt quem fieri, per medios beati;
 Sunt ex hoc in medio theorici locati;
 Est etenim scriptum: medium tenere beati. 355

Cumque finem occupent ethici minores,
 Docent huius seculi quoslibet maiores,
 Si laudes perpetuas querant et honores,
 Ut semper credant se cunctis inferiores. (Langosch 174-5)

In the order of this treatise, the more advanced authors are placed first, so that the lesser ethical authors come at the end. Readers can be inspired by the greater ethical authors, and have blessed joy from the authors who come in the middle. So the theological¹⁰ authors are placed in between, for it is written: the blessed hold to the mean. Because the lesser ethical authors come last of all, they teach the great men of this world that if they seek constant praise and honor, it is because they always believe themselves to be lesser than all. (Copeland and Sluiter 667-8)

As we discover, it is the framework of the treatise, rather than what he says about each author, that most distinguishes the elementary from the advanced authors. The order of the advanced authors, those who appear in the first section, is: Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Juvenal, Persius, Lucan, Statius, and “Homerus minor” or the *Ilias latina*; then the verse grammarians, especially the medieval verse grammars of Alexander of Villa Dei and Eberhard of Béthune who have achieved equal status with the ancient grammarians Donatus and Priscian; then Boethius and Claudian; and then the modern writers Alan of Lille, Matthew of Vendome, Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Walter of Chatillon, and John of Garland. These highest ethical authors seem to be the point of arrival for the oldest students, after they have passed through the authors of middling difficulty (ancient Christian writers and modern writers of Christian or other useful doctrine) and of easiest access (again ancient and modern writers on Christian or moral themes, including matter usually associated with the Cato-book). The obvious points here are that the classical pagan poets lead off the list as the ethical summit, followed by a few moderns who have risen to the standards set by the ancients. But once we leave the framework of the treatise and its divisions into advanced, middling, and

¹⁰ Treating the word *theorici* as *theologici*. Langosch (223, at line 354) notes that *theoricus* carries the meaning in this context of *theologicus*.

elementary, the purpose of the grouping of the advanced authors is a little less clear. Hugh's canon of classical poets includes almost all the same names as the Roman poets mentioned in Conrad of Hirsau's *Dialogus*; in fact Hugh's modern editor, Karl Langosch, has shown how much Hugh seems to depend on Conrad's earlier treatise for information about and choice of authors. In Conrad the selection of authors was fixed to a notion of *romanitas* whether pagan or Christian. But Hugh's list is driven by a more decisive notion of a "classical" canon, with the Christian epic poets Prudentius and Arator now placed among the "middle" authors.

The pedagogical calibration, from easiest to most advanced authors, is hardly new with Hugh of Trimberg, nor is placing the classical authors in the category of "most difficult." As we have seen, Conrad of Hirsau also presents a progression of mastery and textual sophistication from the Cato-book to Virgil, the master and pupil posing increasingly difficult questions of each other as they ascend through the curricular canon. What I believe is new in Hugh's treatise is that he reformulates levels of textual difficulty in terms of what seem to be levels of ethical preparation *in the reader*, not ethical challenge *in the author*. The "ethics" of the ethical writers are not in the writers or their works, but in the students, who must achieve a degree of intellectual and moral awareness that cannot be hurried (cf. Gillespie 150-60, 187, 224). In other words, the lesser authors are not less "ethical" than the greater authors: it is the reader who has greater or lesser capacity to benefit when confronted with a particular author. And every level is ethically complete unto itself: every reader can derive the most possible benefit from the readings appropriate to his level, because presumably the core of ethical teaching is not mutable (this is reminiscent of Augustine's conception of the low, middle, and high styles, all of which convey the same message of conversion and pious love, but which are keyed to different audiences).

But what this means for the classical authors is that they are not really part of a continuum from elementary to advanced (as is so explicit in Conrad), but rather seem to form their own ethical cluster, alongside of the middling authors (Christian authors of antiquity and the Middle Ages) and the elementary authors (the Cato-book and its like). In effect the classical authors constitute their own self-sufficient ethical canon, bringing along with them a select number of medieval writers who are regarded as classicizing in genre or form: the new grammarians who have almost superseded the ancient ones, Alan of Lille's *Anticlaudianus* and *De planctu Naturae*, Matthew of Vendôme's biblical epic *Tobias*, Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria nova*, Walter of Chatillon's quasi-epic *Alexandreis*, and John of Garland's *Parisiana poetria*, which is cited because of the variety of classical meters it illustrates. So it appears that the ethical

self-sufficiency of each of Hugh's groups overrides the long-traditional structure of a continuum from elementary to advanced. Each of the groupings, the advanced authors, the elementary, and the middling forms its own canon, at once inviting and producing a specific kind of reader.

It was perhaps in response to this subgenre of grammatical teaching, the curricular list, that a late *ars poetriae*, the *Laborintus* of Eberhard the German, includes a canon of authors along with its compositional advice to students (Faral 336-77).¹¹ It is not clear when Eberhard wrote the *Laborintus*: possibly as late as about 1280 (placing it within the immediate horizon of Hugh's *Registrum multorum auctorum*), or possibly much earlier in the thirteenth century. As a prescriptive compositional rhetoric, the *Laborintus* follows the program of the earlier *artes poetriae* of Matthew of Vendôme, Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Gervase of Melkley, and John of Garland. In its central conceit, a narrative in which the personifications *Grammatica* and *Poesis* present their respective doctrinal teachings, it borrows the fashionable literary form of the didactic allegories of the twelfth century (Bernardus Silvestris, Alan of Lille); but its purpose is identical with that of the earlier *artes poetriae*.

Yet unlike those earlier *artes*, which use curricular authors in context to exemplify certain literary techniques, the *Laborintus* also introduces a formal list of curricular authors. This is a free-standing catalogue, presented in the voice of the figure *Poesis* at the juncture between her teaching of the *colores rhetorici* and her final topic, meter. It is a substantial list: Cato, Theodulus, Avianus, Aesop, Maximianus, the comedies *Pamphilus* and the *Geta* of Vitalis of Blois, Statius, Ovid, Horace's satires, Juvenal, Persius, the *Architrenius*, Virgil, Lucan, the *Alexandreis*, Claudian, Dares' *De excidio Troiae*, the *Ilias latina*, Sidonius, the twelfth-century *Solimarius* of Gunther de Paris, the herbals of Macer, Marbod of Rennes, Peter Riga's *Aurora*, Sedulius, Arator, Prudentius, the *Anticlaudianus*, the *Tobias*, Alexander of Villa Dei, Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Eberhard of Béthune, Prosper of Aquitaine, Matthew of Vendôme, Martianus Capella, Boethius, and Bernardus Silvestris (Faral lines 599-686). The list has some interesting overlaps with the modern authors in Hugh's survey, but the principles that underlie its organization are not comparably clear. Modern and ancient are interspersed, and the supposedly more advanced poets such as Virgil sit among the traditionally easier authors such as Claudian and Dares. But the purpose of Eberhard's list is contextual: the authors provide the highest models of stylistic virtue for those who would themselves be proficient stylists (cf. Purcell 114-15). The brilliant Persius "verrucis animi non parcit . . . quamvis sit brevitatis

¹¹ On the *Laborintus* see Purcell; Kelly; Curtius 50-1.

amans” (spares no fault of character . . . even though he may be fond of brevity, Faral lines 627-8); Peter Riga “legem mellifluo textit utramque stylo” (interweaves the two testaments in mellifluous style, lines 653-4).¹² The authors are the protégés of *Poesis* herself, who exclaims: “Quam plures alii metri dulcedine quadam / Ducti se legi supposuere meae!” (How many others are led to place themselves under my governance for the sake of sweet meter, lines 685-6). Thus although this may look like a curricular list, its stated function is quite different from what we see in Conrad of Hirsau, Alexander Neckam, and Hugh of Trimberg. Eberhard’s *Laborintus* seems to be a hybrid work, incorporating the sub-genre of the list of authors in a compositional manual which subsumes the canonical list to its own preceptive purpose.

The last work to be considered here is the least known of all these treatises, and is rather hard to place in terms of its genre: it is a collection of literary summaries, excerpts, and overviews that occupies the last 100 folios of British Library Cotton Titus D. XX. It forms part of a codex with other diverse works – thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Anglo-Latin and English writings, including the *De nominibus utensilium* of Alexander Neckam – which were all broken up from other codices and rebound together by or for Robert Cotton. The collection of literary summaries is almost certainly not from England (though it was in England by the late sixteenth century): it is most likely Italian, judging by the literary references it contains, including a summary of a treatise on Roman history by the Florentine humanist Andrea Domenico Fiocco who died in 1452, and whose treatise was printed in 1475. So this collection of epitomes was made sometime in the second half of the fifteenth century. Dr. Greti Dinkova-Bruun of the Pontifical Institute has done the most extensive research on this epitome collection, and I am grateful to her for sharing her expertise with me.¹³

A list of the contents of this text will give a sense of its unusual character: epitomes of allegorical mythography based on Fulgentius and others, of Martianus Capella’s *De nuptiis* (only the first two books), of Bernardus Silvestris’ *Cosmographia*, of Lucan’s *Pharsalia*, the story of the hero Perseus, of Peter Riga’s *Aurora*, of Rufus’ life of the martyr Afra, of Seneca’s tragedies, of dream theory (mentioning Macrobius and Boccac-

¹² Indeed, puns on style abound throughout the catalogue, drawing attention to Eberhard’s own stylistic mastery, e.g. “Felici scribente stylo Felice Capella / Nubit Mercurio Philologia deo” (lines 679-80).

¹³ My account of the text and its contents draws on her forthcoming article, which she graciously showed me in typescript. We plan to collaborate on an article about the treatise, its contents, and its place in literary history.

cio's *De genealogia*), of Martial's epigrams, of the *Argonautica*, of information about the deity Hymen, of Claudian's poetry, of Alan of Lille's *Anticlaudianus*, of Jean d'Hanville's *Architrenius*; an epitome of the lives and writings of the philosophers, a similar epitome (alphabetized) of the poets (to which I will return), epitomes of a number of pious or historical works including the treatise by Fiocco and later on a summary of information about Joseph of Arimathea, and an epitome of Quintus Curtius' account of Alexander the Great.

The alphabetized epitome of the poets, "poetarum vitae et scripta," which is only a chapter in the larger text, is itself quite a remarkable document: it lists more than fifty authors, almost all of them classical, mostly Latin but some Greek, and all of them of the "advanced authors" level according to the standards of earlier curricular surveys. At the end of this chapter (fol. 167r) the compiler mentions Isidore of Seville as a source of the names here. But there are "moderns" who make it into the list, just as a few moderns made it into the larger group of epitomes of which the list of poets is only a chapter. Alan of Lille is in the list, but it also includes Petrarch, "poet of the Florentine nation," with a mention of his Latin epic *Africa* (fol. 161r); it includes Boccaccio, summarizing the whole of *De genealogia gentilium* (fols. 161v-162r.); and most spectacularly it includes Dante, mentioning each book of the *Commedia*, and drawing attention to Dante's "vernacular speech": "Dantes de Aledigeriis poeta Florentinus tres de Paradiso uidelicet Purgatorio et Inferno / (fol. 160v) in suo uulgari eloquio scripsit notabiles comedias" (transcription in Dinkova-Bruun note 25). This is the only vernacular work mentioned in the collection, either in the group of epitomes as a whole or in the specialized chapter on the lives and writings of the poets. The exceptionalism of Dante's vulgar writings in this otherwise Latinate author survey is more fuel to recent arguments about Dante's peculiar success in manufacturing his authorial status as *vernacular* poet, notably Albert Ascoli's recent study of Dante and "modern" authorship. Here Dante's "vernacular eloquence" has migrated into a proto-humanist canon.

This heterogeneous collection of epitomes fits into no established genre. It is certainly no curricular survey of authors nor, as some have thought, can it really be considered a school text (cf. Smits). There is no obvious pedagogical framework here, no progression from easiest to hardest, and not even a chronological division (as we saw in Hugh of Trimberg). The schoolroom as well as literary favorites Virgil, Ovid, and Horace are gone (except for their mention in the alphabetized list of authors, the epitome within the epitome), and the only principle of selection seems to be private taste, showing a strong preference for difficult authors along with an inclination towards allegory, mythography,

history, philosophy, and poetic knowledge. It has no flavor of the “pre-view,” as in Hugh of Trimberg’s register, but might rather be described as the opposite, a distillation of important facts and ideas *after* the works have been read. It might best be seen as something of a private guide to educated taste, quasi-humanist in outlook.¹⁴ Dante’s vernacular presence in this otherwise Latin canon would surely suggest that it is a record of cultivated private reading. But as such, it is not really a very distant step from the teachings of the earlier medieval schoolmasters on the advanced authors. For as I have suggested, the “advanced authors” of the classical canon are directed towards forming ideal readers, not imitative authors. In Conrad of Hirsau, that formation seems to lie (rather uncertainly) in the mastery of Latinity and the technology of reading. In Alexander Neckam’s work, the classical authors provide a grammar of literary history and literary form, illustrating the principles that go into making a taxonomy. In Hugh of Trimberg, the advanced level of the canon reflects a corresponding ethical advancement in its ideal readers, and here a select few modern authors may be admitted into the grouping of the classical canon. In terms of the cultivation of readerly tastes, these earlier texts seem to be continuous with, or to point towards, the apparent purpose of the epitome collection in Cotton Titus D.XX: a summing up of a reading program, the formation of a reader in the image of a classicized canon. The heterogeneity of the works cited in this fifteenth-century reader’s guide, the mixing of ancient and “modern” works, is simply an advancement on Hugh of Trimberg’s opening of the classical canon to modern authors. The inclusion of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio in its otherwise classical list of “Poets” suggests that the category *poetae*, i.e. “the classics,” signifies the highest level of educated taste in the reader rather than the temporal remove of antiquity.

I have presented these texts as if along a continuum, because I believe that they show us that there is much less of a difference between medieval and early humanist uses of ancient literary culture than we often assume. The latest of these texts, the compilation of epitomes, seems to bridge medieval and early modern outlooks on producing the reader. As a category in medieval grammar curricula, the “advanced authors” are not models for schoolboy compositional exercises, or indeed for imitation of any kind, but markers of a certain level of readerly skill. The criteria for authorial prestige are expressed in terms of how readers cultivate themselves through the texts, not in terms of qualities inherent in the authors. In other words, these canonical surveys decisively shift their attention away from whatever may be in the text and

¹⁴ I draw here from Dinkova-Bruun’s speculations about the possible motivations behind this work.

direct it to what is in the reader. And this I believe is the key critical lesson exported beyond the classroom to define authorial self-consciousness in medieval culture. Here we might think of Chaucer's list of authors in book 3 of the *House of Fame*, or rather, his visual survey of authors standing on their pillars. This is not a list of authors for imitation, but a record and representation of a compulsive reader's formation through a time-honored canon. As in the canonical lists that precede his, Chaucer's list represents a decidedly grammatical, not rhetorical or compositional, mode of reading, even though it occurs in his own poem, at one of its most readerly junctures.

In the grammatical subgenre that I have described here, the focus is not on style or local effects or even on the individual authors, but on the authors collectively as points on a large mental or ethical map. In the early *Dialogus super auctores* of Conrad of Hirsau, the notion of an ethical ascent through the canon is mapped out, if only imperfectly. From the turn of the twelfth century, in Alexander Neckam's *Sacerdos ad altare*, the advanced authors comprise a scheme of literary history according to taxonomic principles of genre. In Hugh of Trimberg's *Registrum multorum auctorum*, the advanced authors do not so much instill ethics as require what is already a certain capacity of ethical preparation in the reader. The collection of epitomes from the fifteenth century takes this one step further to present a record of private reading that does not seem to be prescriptive or future-oriented, and in which the prestige of the authors is marked by the demonstrated discernment of the reader. And it is this role, the ethical self-cultivation of the private reader, that the classical canon would continue to play, on a much larger stage, throughout the humanist period.

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