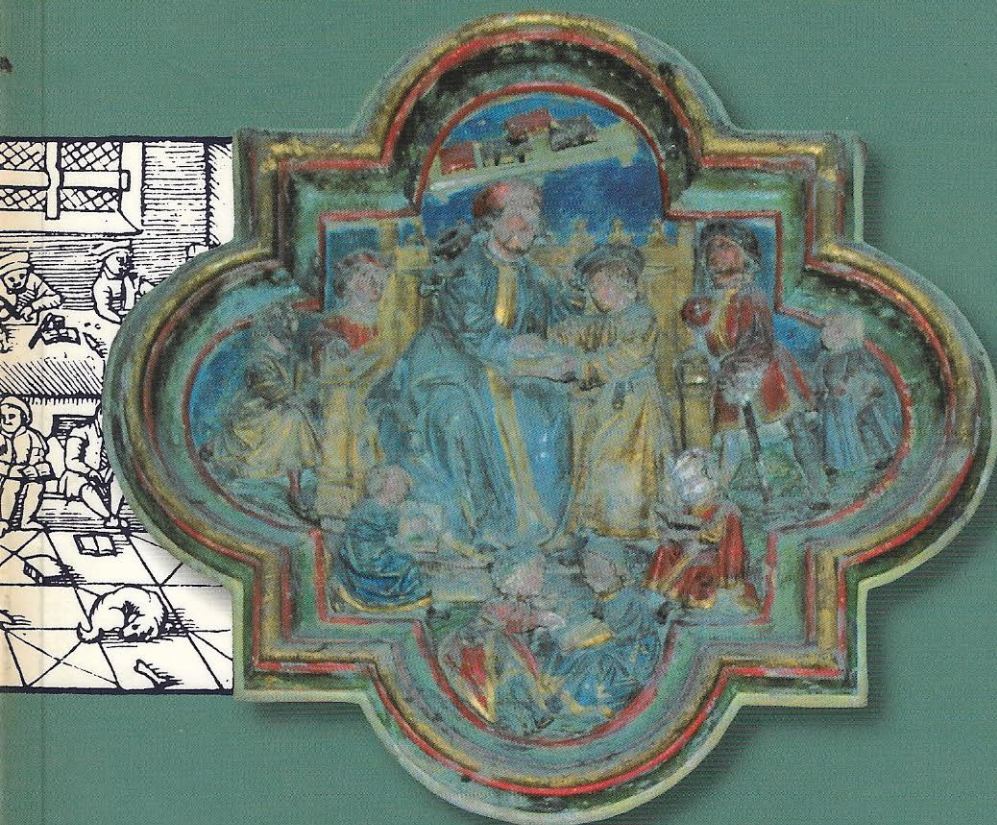


Studies in European
Urban History 15
1100-1800

Back to the Schoolyard

The Daily Practice of Medieval and Renaissance Education



Annemarieke Willemsen



BACK TO THE SCHOOLYARD

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15

STUDIES IN EUROPEAN URBAN HISTORY (1100-1800)

Series Editor

Marc Boone

Ghent University

ANNEMARIEKE WILLEMSSEN

BACK TO THE SCHOOLYARD

The Daily Practice of Medieval and Renaissance Education

BREPOLS

To my parents, who considerably provided for my own education

Colofon

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Cover illustrations

Education of St. Firmin, polychrome sculpture on ambulatory of Amiens cathedral, c.1530.

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Finds from the Grammar School of Groningen, 1500-1550. Groningen, Stichting Monument & Materiaal, site.no. 369. © Jaap Buist.

Woodcut showing the interior of a writing and counting school. Germany, sixteenth century. Photo taken from: Reicke 1971: 55.

Wooden 'plak' (paddle) from a girl's grave in Dordrecht, c.1450.

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No more pencils, no more books
No more teacher's dirty looks
School's out for summer
School's out forever
School's gone to pieces...

after Alice Cooper

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Annemarieke Willemsen
Autumn 2007

*Hand of the author
holding medieval stylus,
Summer 2006. Stockholm,
National Historical
Museum, inv.no. KS 3678.
© Author.*



EDUCATION AND LITERACY

Schools were a serious element of medieval and Renaissance society, and pupils and teachers formed a substantial and recognizable social group. Both the medieval education in monastic and cathedral schools and the late-medieval city or grammar schools are well known and have been well studied. But these studies have largely been limited to educational theory and organizational aspects traceable in accounts and regulations. Humanists have presented the ideal of an educated population,¹ and many preserved schoolbooks show what was learned and in what way. Still lacking, however, is a basic idea of how this school life worked in practice: What did a classroom in those days look like on the inside? How did pupils and teachers dress? What did they use for writing and counting? How did they fill the hours between the lessons? In other words, there is a need for a study of schools based on material culture.

This book is the result of a multidisciplinary research project started in 2001, and it aims to look at school life from the perspective of those who experienced it on a daily basis. It is limited to the period covering the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and focuses mainly on two groups of rarely used sources. On the one hand, excavations of school sites and archaeological finds of school equipment were studied (ill. 1); on the other hand, I examined artistic depictions



ill. 1. Various late-medieval and early-modern objects for reading and writing, excavated in London. Museum of London. © Author.

¹ Bot 1955.

and literary descriptions of schools with all the tangible objects in use there. The combination of sources enabled a detailed impression of late-medieval and early modern school life. But an impression it remains, and if we were able to step into a medieval classroom, we might still be no less than perplexed at the crowd, the noises, the smells...

The Northern and Southern Netherlands are the starting point of this research, and every chapter opens with an example from the Low Countries. Both the flowering situation of education in this territory at this period and some truly unique sources are well worth opening up to 'outsiders' for their own merits. But as it turned out, it was truly enriching to compare the situation in the Netherlands with that in the rest of Western Europe, for it underlined how specific this situation was and offered a context for the particularities encountered. Moreover, many of the sources turned out to be part of a broader tradition, and it would have made no sense, for instance in dealing with the iconographic material, to limit oneself to the material that originated in the Netherlands. That does not mean there are no regional differences, and wherever possible, the Dutch material will be confronted with that from the countries surrounding it, mainly the German countries, France and Italy, and Great Britain.

In this book, the focus is on schools in the modern sense of the word: more or less permanent arrangements for teaching groups of children. This is just one of a number of possibilities for education, but it was the most prevalent in the period under review. There were all kinds of schools in the Later Middle Ages and the early modern period, with various backgrounds, for various target groups, and on various levels. Of course, there are also regional trends and changes over time. The evidence is particularly rich regarding 'secondary' schools, both official Grammar schools and so-called side-schools. These secondary schools could be found in larger towns, were usually controlled by city councils, and flourished in (and with) public town life. The sources are as urban as their subject: council regulations, codes of order, literature, monumental art, and – not in the least – city centre archaeology. Indeed: school is a typically urban phenomenon.²

From c.1300 to c.1600

'We, Floris, count of Holland, announce to everyone who will read this letter or hear it read out: [...] we have allowed foresaid citizens and granted them the right that forever they may give the gift of the school in Dordrecht and of the vergery to anybody they want to give or grant it to'.³ This privilege granted by Floris V from 1290 marks a turning point in the history of education in the Middle Ages in the Netherlands. With it Dordrecht, as the first city in the present-day Netherlands, received authority over its school. From this moment on, the city council was in charge of appointing a headmaster and determining his salary and the school fees. The 'Grote School' (upper school) situated in the churchyard of the 'Grote Kerk' (main church) of Dordrecht became a city school.

The school had already existed for some time by then, and the charter of Floris can best be read as official approval of a situation that was already in practice and as a testimony of the count and city council taking a position against the church. The accounts of the city of Dordrecht are the oldest original municipal account books preserved in the Northern Netherlands, and already in the oldest list of expenses, for the year 1283-1284, there is a payment of 4 pounds and 14 *denarii*

2 Also noted by Krüger 2002: 139, where she remarks that most of her finds are 'Siedlungsfunde', from the early modern period, and from excavations in town centres, and by Moeller et al 1983: 5 ('Das Bildungswesen geriet unter städtische Voraussetzungen und in den Bann städtischer Mentalitäten').

3 The original text can be found at: www.literatuurgeschiedenis.nl/terzijde.

4 Burgers and Dijkhof 1995: sheet 6, line 30.

5 See: Aristodemo 1994: 266 and 168.

6 Gouda, Streekarchief Hollands Midden, Oud-Archief Gouda, inv.nos. 2799-2802, see: Tervoort 1992.

7 From the paper 'Who went to school in late-medieval Holland', presented by Ad Tervoort at the IMC Leeds 2005. I am greatly indebted to him for letting me use his paper and figures.

to ‘mester Wouter den scolmester’ (Master Wouter the schoolteacher).⁴ The head master being paid by the city council is characteristic for changes that occurred in the ‘secondary’ schools of Dutch, Flemish and German cities in the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Gradually, the clergy lost its grip on education and schools found themselves under the direct control of civic governments. In modern terms, schools were ‘secularized’. I have taken this change as the starting point of this book.

In 1567, the Italian traveller and writer Lodovico Guicciardini wrote in his *Descrittione di tutti I Paesi Bassi*: ‘There are in the city [of Antwerp] enough schools with academic masters to instruct the young in all written arts [...] It is common in this area and the use in all of the country, that when children have a good teacher and this man wants them to pursue the arts, to send them to study in Louvain or Douai, and possibly in France, Germany and in Italy afterwards. In the city there are also, as there are in many other good lands of the country, various schools where the French language is taught, to females like to males [...]. And moreover there are masters that teach the Italian and Spanish language as well; it seems therefore in every way that this is, and has been, the common homeland of all Christian countries, and it has not changed in shape or conditions.’ He concludes, with awe, on the level of literacy in the Low Countries as a whole: ‘There were and still are many learned men here, well versed in all sciences and arts. The common people mostly have some grounding in grammar, and nearly all – even peasants and countrymen – can at least read and write’.⁵ It may be that Guicciardini is exaggerating a bit, but still the situation must have differed significantly from what he was used to at home in Italy.

The idea of an extraordinary level of literacy in the Netherlands in the second half of the sixteenth century is confirmed by statistics. Recently, Ad Tervoort has analyzed a set of accounts preserved from the Gouda town school for four consecutive years, from All Saints 1554 to All Saints 1558.⁶ The documents do not give just the bare figures, but the names of the pupils, the class they were in, the street where they lived, and the fees they paid. Therefore, the documents provide us with facts about what part of the population actually attended the city grammar school of Gouda. Moreover, Tervoort was able to compare these figures with lists of school attendance from schools in Alkmaar and Kampen (see fig. I).⁷

Town (and year)	Number of pupils (N)	Est. town population	(N) % of town population	(N) % of est. male age cohort 7–14 (17%)
Alkmaar (1515)	250	5000	5.0%	58.8%
Alkmaar (1517)	114	4750	2.4%	28.2%
Alkmaar (1519)	144	4750	3.0%	35.7%
Gouda (1407)	300	7000	4.3%	50.4%
Gouda (1554-5)	228	9000	2.5%	29.8%
Kampen (c.1555)	220	5500	4.0%	47.1%

Fig. I. School attendance in the towns of Alkmaar, Gouda and Kampen according to Tervoort 2005.

It should be stressed that the estimations have all been taken on the safe side, and that these figures only account for the boys attending this one city grammar school, while we know, for instance from Guicciardini’s account, that there were



ill. 2. *Modern street sign
'Latijnse Schoolstraat'
(Latin School Alley)
in Middelburg.
© Sander Smit.*

many other schools in the cities and that girls could receive an education as well. Moreover, the figures for Alkmaar in 1517 and 1519 include only the paying pupils, and it is well known that cities often provided for the education of those who could not afford the fees. Taking all that into account, if already 30 to 60 per cent of the boys of 7 to 14 years were attending the official city grammar school (ill. 2), it is safe to assume that more children did go to school in the Netherlands in the sixteenth century than did not. That would indeed result in more people being able to read and write than not.

This finding allowed Post, the most important scholar on medieval Dutch schools, to bluntly state in 1954 that in the Low Countries in the late Middle Ages everybody could read and write, not only in towns but in the countryside as well.⁸ In 1995, De Ridder-Symoens came to comparable conclusions for the Southern Netherlands, stating that in the Burgundian period 'large groups within the society of the Netherlands could read and probably write as well', and that 'in the sixteenth century in Antwerp, the largest and most prosperous city in the Netherlands, the only true illiterates were to be found among unskilled labourers and women of the lower social classes'.⁹ To what degree this situation was extraordinary in a broader regional perspective is open to question. For some cases in Italy and France, when statistics are available, it has been calculated likewise that at least a third of the boys were educated (city of Florence, fourteenth century), rising even to 50 per cent (city of Valenciennes, sixteenth century), and in 1380 over 60 primary schools are recorded in the city of Paris alone.¹⁰ It remains unclear if these must be considered exceptions, being large and prominent cities in countries that were as a whole much less urbanized than the Netherlands, or if numbers have been systematically underestimated wherever hard evidence is missing. Moreover, the question remains open how these figures relate to the estimate of only 10 per cent of the population of Great Britain being able to read and write at the end of the fifteenth century.

For the Netherlands, the centuries between Floris's gift of the school to Dordrecht and Guicciardini's account of a near-universal Dutch literacy must have been the heyday of education, obviously striking in the European context of the time, but also in historical perspective: relatively more children were schooled in the sixteenth than in the eighteenth century. Education had reached a zenith in the sixteenth century partly due to, but partly already before, important changes like the Reformation. In the sixteenth century Dutch society was transformed from 'medieval' into 'modern'; for this territory, the early sixteenth century is viewed in general as the aftermath of the Middle Ages, while the last decades of the century, when Holland was already entangled in the Revolt, is definitely seen as the overture of the Golden Age. The Reformation, that took firmest root in the northern part of the country, directly involved changing school curricula to the new Faith, which was an advocate for education if only for its emphasis on individual reading and study of the Bible. At the same time, schools in the Catholic southern part of the Low Countries benefited from the fight against Reform, for instance because of the strong focus of the Church on education after the Council of Trent (1545-1563) and the excellent school network implemented by Counter-Reformists like the Jesuits.¹¹ Incomparable but related changes like the invention and early development of printing clearly influenced the daily practice of schools. These changes in the sixteenth century constitute the end of my book.

8 Post 1954: 20.

9 De Ridder-Symoens 1995: 7 and 6.

10 On the panels of the 2007 exhibition 'L'école au Moyen Âge' in the Tour Jean sans Peur in Paris, but not included in the catalogue of the same name.

11 Boekholt and De Booy 1987: 15, 18-19.



ill. 3. *Modern street sign in Dublin, 'school children crossing'. © Author.*

Material school culture

Nowadays, we have a solid image of school children in our heads (ill. 3): groups of boys and girls, with heavy bags on their backs, making a lot of noise when they pass us by on their way to and from school. This image has unlimited variations, according to the specific place and time. The English, for instance, will think mainly of children in school uniforms, while the Dutch picture them on bikes. The sound of gameboys and mobile phones may be in our ears when we think of them now, while the generation of our parents still imagines the clicking of clogs and the rattling of hoops. The image of school children is mainly based on what they wear and carry: on their material culture.

In the Middle Ages, people also had an image of school children, of what they wore and what they carried. This picture derives from all kinds of texts and images where pupils are depicted or described. The oldest preserved Dutch school rule, from fourteenth-century Deventer, evokes a familiar image, when ordering that the school children who come into the church to sing, straight out of school, should not go onto the choir 'in their clogs, hoods and hats, packed with their bags on their backs'.¹²

In the Later Middle Ages, education was marked by diversity: monastic and lay schools, Latin and French schools, run by men of various denominations and backgrounds. From the viewpoint of traditional, institutionally based history, the differences between all these schools were essential. The questions of who was in control, what their goals were, who made the rules, who inspected them, and who paid for it all, were rightly among the focal points of the writing about the history of schools. These questions could all be – and were in part – answered using 'traditional' written sources like laws, regulations, charters, official reports and account books. The image of the school system thus brought to light was of great value as a start to the research for this book.

However, the differences in schools were not that important for the daily life of those attending them, and especially unimportant for their material culture. Children attending school in monasteries, chapters, or 'public' school buildings, would all use the same implements for reading and writing (ill. 4), wear similar

¹² Dumbar 1732: book 3, Chapter 10, p. 304-305. I used the copy in the University Library of Leiden (448 A 2); also quoted in: Moes-Jonasse 1998: 59.

ill. 4. *School, print by Hans Weiditz for a Cicero edition, c.1430. Paris, National Library of France, Éstampes, Ea II rés. © BNF.*



clothes, and play largely the same games in their spare hours. Children attending boarding school, in whatever kind of place, would need beds and pisspots and cutlery and shoes and so on. That is why, in spite of the various denominations of the schools excavated, the material culture of schools as it emerges from archaeological sources is basically identical.

What would be important for a child is the difference between ‘under schools’ and ‘big schools’, the equivalent of primary and secondary education. For any child, the moments of going to school for the first time, and again going to the ‘big school’, were vast changes in its life – as they are nowadays – and they were treated as rites of passage throughout the medieval and early modern periods. For the first day at school, a child would be brought to the place, accompanied by its parents who ‘handed it over’ to the teacher; the freshman would be carrying new equipment restricted to school use, like a hornbook or a writing tablet, and often wear new clothes.

Going to attend secondary school would change one’s life again, especially if one were boarding a school in town and were leaving home to go and live with a teacher and other pupils. Again, this transition was shaped into a transitory ritual, with the parents taking the journey with the child to install it in its new surroundings, packing its new clothes and personal items for the stay; this event made an excellent moment for presents related to school needs, like writing cases, schoolbags and inkstands.

When pursuing an education after secondary school, the change to university life would represent another leap, involving moving to an even bigger city, finding a place to live and plan a curriculum and study, this time usually basically by oneself. University students had their own material culture as well. This is an equally interesting subject for research, as many sources of all kinds have been preserved, and many scholars wrote extensively on their student life, but it is outside the scope of this book.

Literacy

There is also a more metaphysical level to education and literacy. Usually the word ‘literacy’ is used in the strictest sense as ‘being able to read’; whether it means being able to write too is already subject to discussion. In anthropology, the word denotes the possession of the language tools necessary to function within the group one belongs to. That means that there are various literacies. For an Inuk ‘literacy’ would indeed include knowing the famous tens of names for snow, and the literacy of a North American posse would be totally different from that of an Ivy League university.¹³ This is a useful restriction when thinking about medieval literacy. That too may have taken all kinds of shapes, with a different literacy needed in towns and in villages, or in Italy and in the Netherlands. It is at least good to realize that the reading of handwritten Latin texts with many abbreviations might actually presuppose a higher level of ‘literacy’ than is asked from pupils nowadays.

Literacy, then, is more than basic reading skills, and therefore it cannot be studied by looking at preserved schoolbooks alone. Even within the ‘International Standing Conference on the History of Education’ (ISCHE) it is common to pinpoint the beginning of literacy in a certain country at the appearance of the first printed grammar in the vernacular language, usually in the sixteenth or early-seventeenth century. In this respect, archaeological finds of reading materials, writing equipment and counting devices are of the utmost importance, for their mere presence

13 For this, I used the lecture by Brian V. Street at ISCHE 28 in Umeå, August 2006 as a base; see also Street 2006.

indicates earlier literacies. And there is much to know beside written things, and many ways of picking up knowledge. The things learned at school have always been complemented by the things learned from life itself.

School life

‘School life’ then is different from the life of other groups in society, and it can be traced in special ways of dress and behaviour of both pupils and teachers, reflected in a specialized material culture of school life. In a medieval town, pupils as a group would be a substantial and recognizable set of its own, both officially – they fell under a separate jurisdiction, and exceptions to rules were made for them – and unofficially, as their shared characteristics were partly what was seen and heard of them passing by, and partly a picture in the minds of others. Both consciously and unwillingly, schoolchildren would show off that they belonged to that group.

To conclude, it should not be forgotten that for schoolchildren, medieval and modern alike, school is the framework of their existence. Unlike for adults, school, not home or work, is the core experience. It is what determines their surroundings, their dress and their accessories. They spend the lion’s share of their time at school, and the time not sitting in class is spent mostly around school, or on the way to or from school, or doing school work, or playing with school buddies. They see and hear more of their teachers and classmates than of their parents and siblings. Therefore, school must not be considered a side issue. It is, and has always been, a way of life.

Structure of this book

Chapter 1 presents a short overview of the system of school in the Middle Ages as we know it from published written sources and historiography, as well as a critical look into the nature of the new types of sources used for this research. These sources come together in Chapter 2, which is an encyclopaedic survey of the objects used for teaching. Chapter 3 presents the assemblages of school-related finds within the contexts of excavated schools and boarding houses for pupils. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 deal with iconographical sources on schools within their artistic contexts, singling out the themes of education within the life cycle in Chapter 5 and that of Grammar as a teacher in Chapter 6. The sources come together for a last time in Chapter 7, which aims to sketch the daily life at late-medieval and Renaissance schools in as much detail as possible, and leads directly to the conclusions.

ill. 5. *Boy with hornbook introduced by Lady Grammar to the Tower of Grammar, woodcut in Gregor Reisch, Margarita Philosophica, Basel 1535. Leiden, Museum Boerhaave, Inst. 322, page 1-2.*
© Museum Boerhaave.

MEDIEVAL SCHOOLS

1.1 The school system in the Netherlands

Historiography

Late-medieval and Renaissance city schools have been studied before. For the Northern Netherlands, we still rely heavily on Post's work from 1954¹; although much additional information has emerged since then, his overview goes largely unchallenged. As Post concentrated on the period 1200-1500, for the sixteenth century Bot's² and Fortgens's³ books on humanism and education are complementary to Post's study. Medieval and early modern schools also have a modest place in overviews of the history of education in the Low Countries⁴ and in the many case studies on the history of a Dutch grammar school, usually published in the context of a

1 Post 1954.

2 Bot 1955.

3 Fortgens 1956.

4 Schoengen 1911-1925; Boekholt and De Booy 1987.



jubilee.⁵ For the Southern Netherlands, the work done on medieval schools in the framework of a 1986 exhibition in Brussels on primary education in Belgium⁶ is the most important, while information about secondary education again is spread over many jubilee publications. Hilde de Ridder-Symoens, known for her work on medieval universities, wrote extensively on pre-university education as well.⁷

Learning the basics

In the Late Middle Ages and early modern period, boys and girls – from the age of five or six – started their lessons by learning how to read and write, sometimes as part of home instruction, but usually at a small school called ‘onderschool’ (under school), ‘kleine school’ (small school), ‘Dietsche’ or ‘Duytsche’ school (Dutch school) or ‘schrijfschool’ (writing school). There were many of these, often run by women in or near their own house, and there would be one close to home. The teacher or mistress here instructed small groups of boys and girls, providing an education that was meant as basic instruction, not wasted on anyone (ill. 5). These schools also functioned as ‘bewaarschooltjes’ (day-care centres or pre-schools).

The lessons given at the under-schools were mainly in reading, writing, praying and singing; counting is mentioned from the sixteenth century onwards as well. As a rule, the lessons were given in the vernacular. Such education was aimed at children below the age of seven or eight, and can be summarized easily as everything that did not belong at the ‘big school’, which meant everything before Latin grammar, ‘tot hun Donaet toe’ (up to their Donatus).⁸ It is unclear when these primary schools first began operation – they only start surfacing in the sources when they became a threat to the schools favoured by city governments.

Girls in primary school

Under schools or side schools were restricted only if they competed with the official city grammar school, which meant that the offering of instruction to boys under seven and to girls was normally allowed, as was reported for Dordrecht in 1450.⁹ In other words, female literacy was directly linked to possibilities for running under-schools, and arrangements made in city rules for separating the sexes indicate that most of the under-schools were, in fact, mixed.

As an example one could take the fifteenth-century city regulations of Amsterdam, well-preserved and edited in full in 1902.¹⁰ In those, school children (‘schoelkinderen’) are mentioned often; one time because of their role in a procession,¹¹ but in all other cases because there was a problem involving the running of ‘onderscole’ (primary schools). The first time this is mentioned, running such a school was simply prohibited, with those who broke the rule charged a fine. It was also prohibited for anybody to send his children to these under-schools, at risk of paying the same fine. The rule specified that all children should be sent to one master named Anthonijs.

The second time the case is detailed further, showing that parents did make all sorts of claims why they wanted their children to go to such an ‘under-school’ and not pay the fine:

‘Item, schout, schepenen ende rade willicoren ende gebieden, dat nyemant en moet siin kinderen setten in enighe onderscholen off aldaer ter scolen te houden, uitgeseit maechdekijns, op

(Idem, bailiff, aldermen and council rule and order that nobody should send his children to any under-school or keep them there, except girls, to a fine of 10,000

5 For a full list of jubilee publications of Dutch schools, compiled by Jos Swiers, see: <http://www.xs4all.nl/~remery/Achtergrondinfo/Gedenkbojdos/gedenk1.html> (September 2007).

6 D’Haenens 1986.

7 See for instance: De Ridder-Symoens 1995.

8 Post 1954: 83.

9 Post 1954: 69.

10 Breen 1902.

11 Breen 1902: 614.

een boete van Xm steens te verbueren, also dicke ende menichwerff als hijt dede, uutgesteken tot meester Pauwels Tanckensoon; mer die dair niet te setten noch ter scole te houden, tensy dat zy eerst comen boven opter stede huys by den gemenen gerechte mit horen kinderen ende tonen die, omme the besien off zy nut siin ter choere te gaen off niet, ende hem daer by den gerechte geconsenteert worde, dat zy horen kinderen daer setten ende ter scholen houden moegen, ende anders niet'.¹²

bricks forfeited, as often and many times as he does it, to be given to master Pauwels Tanckensoon; but not to send or keep them there, except when they first come upstairs in the city hall to the public court with their children and show them there, to decide if they are suited to attend choir practice or not, and if that is allowed him there by the court, that they can send their children and keep them in school there, and not otherwise).

After this, sending boys under the age of 15 (or 14) to under-schools, or keeping those schools, sometimes defined as teaching them to write or read, kept needing to be outlawed again and again.¹³ This indicates that the problem was a continuing one.

In the order quoted above, under-schools were still allowed for girls and sometimes separate regulations were made for schools 'omme den meyskens te leren' (to teach girls).¹⁴ The mixed character of these schools required some practical rules as well, like these from 1509:

'Item, dat hy geen en maechden en zal mogen houden, omme die te leren lesen, scriuen ende rekenen, dan mits die settende in een andere camere dan daer de knechtgens in sitten; dat oick de knechtgens een halff ure voor de meyskens ter scole comen zullen ende een halff ure vroeger weder uuytgaen oft anders, te weten dat zy altijt op verscheiden tyden ende nyet tesamen op een ure en sullen ter schole comen'.¹⁵

(Idem, that he cannot keep girls, to teach them to read, write and count, except when he places them in another room than that where the boys are sitting; also that the boys come to school half an hour before the girls and leave again half an hour earlier or otherwise, but in a way that they always come to school at different times and not together at the same hour).

Later orders prohibit offering under-schools to both boys and girls,¹⁶ which must mean that by then in Amsterdam the girls too could go to an 'official' school.

Grammar schools

After having learned the basics, most of the boys were sent to an official city school, usually at an age somewhere between seven and ten. There were about 60 of these grammar schools in the present-day Northern Netherlands around 1500;¹⁷ every city had one, and just a few had more than one: Amsterdam had two and Antwerp had five.¹⁸ In addition, there were other schools with different subject-matter on offer. As all these secondary schools were concentrated in the larger cities, in many cases pupils had to board there. A good school would attract pupils from within the city and from elsewhere in roughly equal numbers,¹⁹ and all those from afar would have to leave home, go live with a master, another family, or in a house or convent with other schoolboys. In that way, going to the 'big school' changed their whole life.

In most cases, secondary schools were still closely related to the church. Teacher and pupils of the school had to add lustre to the services in the church, and the curriculum was adapted to that. In villages, the verger often functioned as teacher,

12 Breen 1902: 197.

13 Breen 1902: 223-224, 251, 253, 314, 390-391, 464-465, 493 and 509.

14 Breen 1902: 390-391.

15 Breen 1902: 465.

16 Breen 1902: 509.

17 Spoelder 2000: 1.

18 De Ridder-Symoens 1995: 10-11.

19 Post 1954: 166.

while in cities there was at least one secondary school in every parish. Some of these were ‘kapittelscholen’ (chapter schools) because their parish belonged to a chapter; therefore the term does not say much about the nature of the school. Masters themselves were not always part of the clergy, and the usual term for the schoolmaster, *magister*, can be used for clergymen and laymen alike. Nevertheless, the school was tied to the church and often literally stood next to it. From the fourteenth century onwards, school came more and more into the hands of city councils, which had battled successfully for the ‘scolastrie’ (right to the school), so they were allowed to appoint the headmaster themselves. From the fifteenth century onwards, schoolmasters are counted among the regular civil servants of the city.

The oldest specialized school order of the Netherlands still preserved was composed at the end of the fourteenth century for the school next to the Church of St. Lebuinus in Deventer. The original got lost like most others, but it was copied as a whole into a history of the city printed in 1732.²⁰ It is in Latin, quite short and basic, and is a good example of the kind of subjects that had to be regulated in a chapter school at this time. It is noticeable that the pupils are choir boys too, and that quite a number of the articles relate to their behaviour in church. It is likely that this code of order was made when and because the spheres of influence of the clergy and the teachers started to diverge.

Councils usually limited their ambitions to exercising authority over the one so-called ‘grote school’ (upper school), often standing next to the oldest or biggest church. This means that some of the schools ‘escaped’ city control. The small chapter school that instructed around 25 singers for St. Peter’s Church in Middelburg, founded in 1405, managed to stay outside the city’s sphere of influence. The same can be said of the large and famous cathedral schools of Utrecht, Maastricht, Arnhem, and Roermond. In Arnhem and Roermond this was the case because the city already had a grammar school, in Utrecht and Maastricht because the city appointed the church masters that supervised the schools – in that way they were able to exert their influence on the schools anyway. Nevertheless, in these cities too the main school was privileged: in Utrecht girls and boys under nine were allowed to go to all schools, but boys from twelve years old who wanted to learn Latin could go only to the school at St. Jerome, led by the lay order of the ‘Broeders van Gemene Leven’ (Brethren of Common Life). In Maastricht and Liège the school of the brothers was favoured too – this policy of the city governors must be seen as an effort to ensure the quality of Latin education.²¹

The grammar schools outgrew their function and fell out of fashion in the course of the sixteenth century. By then, partly because of the successful ‘educational policy’, the lower classes of these schools had become densely populated by children from a broad segment of society: from more social strata than ever and including females as well. This caused a growing division between the need for education of the now-large school population, wherever possible in the vernacular, and the (humanist) wish for a more profound study of classical Latin. Where Latin had been a spoken language in the Middle Ages, it now became increasingly a goal in itself. In practice, this resulted in a rift between the Dutch lower forms and the higher Latin forms. In most cases, this eventually led to a split of the city school into a ‘Neder-duitse’ (Dutch) and a Latin school, which often meant a schism between poor and rich.²² These Latin schools, which would have their heyday in the first half of the seventeenth century, were the basis of the modern-day *gymnasium*, and it is these institutions that are often proud of having been a grammar school for up to six hundred years.

20 Dumbart 1732: book 3, chapter 10, p. 304-305. I used the copy in the University Library of Leiden (448 A 2).

21 Post 1954: 47-58.

22 Boekholt and De Booy 1987: 60-61.

ill. 6. Priscian as a teacher of grammar with two pupils, original sculpture from the bell-tower of Florence by Luca della Robbia. Florence, Museo dell'Opere del Duomo. © Author.

ill. 7. Logic, Rhetoric and Geometry, Book of Hours, Italian illuminator, c.1500. London, British Library, ms Add. 11866, f9v-10r. © British Library.



Schooldays

The city grammar schools, called Latin schools in the Netherlands, all had more or less the same study program, based on the *artes liberales* or seven liberal arts (ills. 6 & 7), whose tasks were memorized as:

'Grammatica loquitur	(Grammar speaks
Dialectica vera docet	Dialectic teaches the truth
Rhetorica verba colorat	Rhetoric colours the words
Musica cantit	Music sings
Arithmetica numerat	Arithmetic counts
Geometria ponderat	Geometry weighs
Astronomia colit astra ²³	Astronomy honours the stars.)

In practice, the schools focused on the first three and offered a thorough study of the Latin language, mainly through endless classes in *grammatica*, where the boys would study Latin, both grammar and literature as well as active writing and speech. The most important book used was the *Ars grammatica* (also *Ars Minor*) of Aelius Donatus, the 'Donaat', written in the fourth century AD and the pre-eminent school text well into the sixteenth century – it was reprinted 29 times in the Northern Netherlands between 1500 and 1520.²⁴ The study of this *grammatica*, combined with other Latin texts of both Roman and contemporary authors, was the main activity at the schools. Widely used basic school books include the *Disticha* of Cato, the *Institutiones grammaticae* of Priscian and the *Doctrinale* of Alexander de Villa Dei (c.1200); both Fortgens and Bot deal with the subject matter of the grammar schools in detail.²⁵

23 Fortgens 1956: 65.

24 Fortgens 1956: 24.

25 Fortgens 1956: 62-88; Bot 1955: passim.

26 Fortgens 1956: 57-58.

Pupils started the Latin school in the seventh (lowest) class. Many schools also had an eighth class, called *octava* or *nulla*, for children who could not yet read and write. To proceed to a higher level, pupils had to prove that they could manage a certain amount of subject matter, and until the fifteenth century the classes and pupils are more commonly labeled after their main subject, like *donatistae* for those studying the Donatus.²⁶ Usually boys stayed for only a few years and not all of them made it through to the third class or *tertia* and passed what were considered the final exams. Only some outstanding schools offered a second and a first class, levels which could overlap higher education. It depended strongly on the knowledge and character of the headmaster how much would be taught of subjects like Greek, mathematics and geography, features that could make a school famous and popular.

Pupils attended at least six or seven hours of class a day. They started early, at six in the morning in summer and an hour later in winter, and they usually enjoyed a break about every two hours. After the first lesson they had some sort of breakfast and attended mass, with class until ten or eleven. After morning class their main meal was served, followed by house tasks or free time, resulting in a long midday break. There would be class afterwards from one or two until five or six, with at least one break in the middle of the afternoon. Most schools gave Wednesday afternoons and Saturday afternoons off, and Sunday in principle was a day free from work, although religious instruction might be offered after Sunday church. This scheme resulted in a work week of about 32 hours.²⁷

The school year followed the calendar determined by agriculture and the church. The school year started in October, after the harvest, and was divided into three semesters by Christmas and Easter, each framed by a two-week vacation. The year then ended in May or June, when exams were taken if necessary. The months of July and August served as a summer vacation, when most children would have had to help out at home. There were more days off, at Pentecost, other Holy Days, and on feasts specific to the school, city, or country. It is estimated that at least a hundred days per year were holidays.

Teachers' agendas

Humanism firmly marked Dutch education. Among the best headmasters, who indeed attracted many pupils from far away, were Johannes Cele called Celius (1340-1417) in Zwolle, whose school held between 800 and 1,000 boys around 1400, and Alexander Hegius (1433-1498) in Deventer, who had Erasmus among his pupils. Himself educated at the Deventer school, Johannes Murmellius would head a great grammar school in Alkmaar around 1515; it held over a thousand pupils, of whom only twelve attended the highest class (the *prima*) that rivaled the first stages of university. Other humanists famous as *rectores* were Macropedius, who led schools in Bois-le-Duc and Utrecht; Praedinius, Wessel Gansfort and Rudolph Agricola in Groningen and Petrus Nannius in Gouda and Alkmaar. Many of these left didactic writings as well as the school exercises they composed.

These humanist educators instituted fundamental changes in school practice, including the division into class levels, allowing pupils to advance at their own pace. In the spirit of humanism, competition was encouraged in the grammar schools. As early as the sixteenth century, an award ceremony was common, and it would become a characteristic of the Latin schools of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.²⁸ In this ceremony, the best pupils of each year would be given rewards in

²⁷ Boekholt and De Booy 1987: 62.

²⁸ Spoelder 2000.

the form of prize books, usually editions of texts used at school. The ceremony was public and the winning pupils would deliver a speech in Latin on a scholarly subject. In this way, the school could ‘show off’ the quality of its pupils, of its education and thus of its schoolmaster. Since the master was selected by the city council, all this was used as a means of advertising the city as a whole.

The aim of the Latin schools was to deliver literate pupils who were fluent in Latin, which, as a world language, would open up many career possibilities. They had to develop a good hand of writing too, for many of them would end up as clerks. But they also had to be good Christians, as in this period education was regarded as a way to elevate the whole of society. Within the Christian concept of charity, the likes of Juan Luis Vives made a plea for educating the lower classes and the poor, and for establishing Sunday schools for working-class youth – mainly realized from the sixteenth century onwards.²⁹ The Brethren of Common Life played a particularly important role in the flowering of grammar schools. They specialized in pastoral care for pupils and students and lodged many out-of-towners, both in their own houses and in the boardinghouses they founded. The heydays of the schools of Celius in Zwolle and of Hegius in Deventer were made possible by the houses for pupils that the Brethren maintained there, including some specifically meant for poor boys attending the grammar school. In the sixteenth century, the Jesuits would base their successful school foundations on the example of the Brethren.

The prosperity of the city schools depended strongly on the *extranei* (pupils from outside) who made up half of their population. They needed board and lodging, and taking a few pupils into one’s house was viewed an act of charity. Usually the boys paid a fee for board and lodging, although there was also a problem with pupils wandering the cities in search of free board. The life in a boardinghouse or *bursa*, college or monastery, where board was offered by certain religious orders was preferable. They often housed only a limited number of pupils (a dozen) supervised by a housekeeper and a teacher,³⁰ although the poor pupils’ house in Zwolle held about 50 pupils, and the Bogardenschool in Bruges lodged over 150. These institutions had a larger staff and more facilities as well. Most houses were intended for poor pupils and called *domus pauperum*, but there were houses for paying pupils as well (*domus divitum*). The houses had a strict set of rules, in which the hours for prayer were combined with the school hours.

Other school types

The grammar school was by no means the only school available. In the fifteenth century, as more and more children were sent to school and the lowest classes of the grammar schools were growing more numerous, there was a notable rise of private secondary ‘bijscholen’ (side schools). They often focused on subjects other than Latin, specializing in for example accounting or French, or only instructing girls. In spite of this, the many restrictions put on these side schools in the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century city regulations indicate that they did compete with the ‘big school’.

The city councils singled out the city school mainly as a way of controlling education and because they were keen to see their investments rewarded. To discourage the running of side schools, not only legal barriers were constructed but economic ones as well; the parents who sent their pupils to a different school had to pay fees to both the master there and to the master of the Latin school or the city.

²⁹ De Ridder-Symoens 1995: 13 and 9.

³⁰ Post 1954: 170.

This latter was meant as a compensation for the money the *magister* was ‘denied’ by not having their children in his school. Therefore, parents needed a good reason, and quite some money, to send their offspring to a side school, but many must have had both, as side schools, especially French schools that prepared for a merchant’s career, flourished.

To the side schools belonged all schools that did not teach Latin, but taught in ‘duytsch’ (Middle Dutch) or French, even if this was done at secondary level. In the cities, starting with those prospering in Flanders in the fourteenth century, there was an increase in schools that offered a curriculum more tailored to business and trade. These are usually called ‘Walsche’ or ‘Franse’ (French) schools or ‘handelsscholen’ (trade schools) and their mission is described well in the 1504 Antwerp regulations:

<p>‘Om kinderen, jong en oud, en alle personen te leren lezen, schrijven, rekenen, ende cijferen ende oick walsch te leren’.³¹</p>	<p>(To teach children, young and old, and all persons reading, writing, counting, mathematics and French as well.)</p>
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The main reason for choosing a side school must have been the different curriculum, which may have been seen as more suited for some children or within some professional groups. In teaching arithmetic, accounting, French, or other ‘modern’ languages, they responded better to the changing demands of the population. Apart from this, side schools usually had smaller classes than grammar schools, and no church duties or civic chores, which took up a lot of time but may have been a welcome distraction as well; the choir boys of the Utrecht cathedral school went into the fields on festive days to collect flowers and bulrushes to decorate the church (c.1349)³² and the pupils of the city school of Bois-le-Duc in 1578 had to clean the market square after the garrison had left.³³

To sum up, citizens in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries could choose a school for their children relatively freely and those who were able and willing to pay increasingly chose a specialized education. Smaller villages had schools too, and by the sixteenth century every village offered at least primary education, but the coverage was lower. As pursuing secondary education for a village boy would mean moving to the city, not all the boys capable of pursuing secondary education did so, resulting in a relatively lower percentage of participation in secondary education in the countryside – a situation that still held true in the mid-twentieth century. And schools were just one means of learning: there were more compact arrangements for the education of the very rich and those with special needs, and children could also be trained in a craft, although apprenticeship contracts usually include some provision for acquiring basic literary and numeric skills as well.

Girls in secondary school

Girls do not often seem to have pursued an education in a public place after primary instruction, but throughout the Middle Ages they had access to a network of all kinds of private education in homes and nunneries. That does not mean it was always impossible for females to attend secondary school, and indeed it would become increasingly common in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In 1320 Brussels is reported to have two secondary city schools, one for boys and one for girls, who could learn Latin as easily as males of the same age, and figures for the

31 Post 1954: 65.

32 Fortgens 1956: 36.

33 Boekholt and De Booy 1987: 12.

city of Valenciennes in the fourteenth century count 145 girls in a total of 516 pupils.³⁴ In 1407 at the Gouda grammar school, girls had their own classroom and teacher, and in 1445 in Emmerich (present-day Germany) girls could go to the city school as well. In Culemborg, the girls were placed in the attic, and at the business school in Bergen op Zoom, where at least ‘penningen legghe’ (counting with casters) was taught, in 1482 it was arranged that the girls sit apart from the boys.³⁵ Evidence from Hattem and Sittard also confirms the presence of girls in the secondary school.³⁶ Both the Renaissance and the Reformation had a positive influence on the ideas about the education of females, effecting in a larger number of possibilities for girls.³⁷

1.2 A European perspective

Germany

De Ridder-Symoens concluded that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, ‘the Netherlands were the educational leaders of Europe’.³⁸ The situation in the Low Countries is best paralleled by that of present-day Germany at the same time. This is not surprising, as the borders were different in the Middle Ages, and at least the eastern part of the Netherlands was imperceptibly linked to the western part of what is now Germany. The articles in the excellent volume *Studien zum städtischen Bildungswesen des späten Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit* of 1983³⁹ sketch a situation of grammar schools, sprung from church-affiliated schools, in all German cities, and of heavy battles between clerical and secular authorities over the rights to the schools from the thirteenth century onwards. Indeed, schooling is seen as a typically urban phenomenon in this country. From the end of the fifteenth century, German schools were transformed within the Reformation movements, fuelled especially by the ideas of Luther, and the urban school system was influenced by humanism and the *Devotio Moderna* as was the case in the adjacent part of the Netherlands. What is also comparable is that juridical sources tend to become abundant only from the Late Middle Ages, when schools are under control of the city councils. Other available sources allow a similar impression: neither the preserved written records, nor the literature, nor the art works from these regions seem to differ much in essence from those available in the Low Countries, and indeed Germany is one of the few other countries where school objects have been preserved⁴⁰ and schools sites excavated in much the same way as in the Netherlands.

France

Danièle Alexandre-Bidon, who wrote a sublime thesis on children in Gothic France,⁴¹ has devoted time to medieval schools in all her books on childhood, always focussing strongly on France and using a large database of miniatures from the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris.⁴² One result of her work has been a small exhibition in the Tour Jean sans Peur in Paris in the summer of 2007, with an accompanying catalogue summarizing French education in the Later Middle Ages.⁴³ There is every indication of a fully developed school system (like the one in the Low Countries), both in records and in statistics, from over 60 primary schools in the city of Paris in 1380 to 50 per cent of boys recorded educated in the city of Valenciennes (nowadays a French city) in the sixteenth century. Of course, France had large universities by then and the 10,000 academics living in the

34 D’Haenens 1986: 176.

35 Post 1954: 76–79.

36 De Ridder-Symoens 1995: 10.

37 D’Haenens 1986: 176.

38 De Ridder-Symoens 1995: 17.

39 Moeller et al 1983.

40 Krüger 2002.

41 Alexandre-Bidon 1985.

42 Especially Riché and Alexandre-Bidon 1994 and Alexandre-Bidon and Lett 2000.

43 *École au Moyen Âge* 2007.

ill. 8. *Teacher with whip and pupils studying. From a Jewish Haggadah manuscript, 1350, Spain. Sarajevo, Zemaljski Muzej. Photo taken from: Haverkamp 2004: 51.*



struction adapted to every group in French society: familial instruction on farms, detailed apprentice contracts for learning a craft, schools in monasteries and cathedrals, systematic special teaching in Jewish communities (ill. 8), elite training at castles, all the way up to private instruction for princes, as ‘an illiterate king is like a crowned ass’.⁴⁴ Unlike in the Netherlands, where at the end of the Middle Ages no monastic school could compete with the urban grammar schools, the best education seems to have been concentrated in the large French abbeys like Cluny. And for a feudal society reputed to be extremely aware of class and gender, there were remarkably many opportunities for women to be educated, mainly outside the realm of official schools. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, Christine de Pisan, prototype of an educated woman, formulated a distinct role for (noble) women in the education of their children: supervising their religious and moral upbringing, yes, but teaching them Latin and the arts as well. She states that girls are as capable of learning as boys:

⁴⁴ ‘Un roi illettré est comme un âne couronné’, see: *École au Moyen Age* 2007: 28.

‘Si c’était la coutume d’envoyer les petites filles à l’école et de leur enseigner méthodiquement les sciences comme on le fait pour les garçons, elles apprendraient et comprendraient les difficultés de tous les arts et de toutes les sciences aussi bien qu’eux’.⁴⁵

(If it was common to send small girls to school and methodically teach them the arts as they do the boys, they would learn and understand the difficulties of all the arts and all the sciences as well as the boys do.)

This indicates that at least for boys schooling was the rule. It can be concluded that by the end of the Middle Ages, almost every young citizen in France could have access to basic instruction.⁴⁶

Italy

Paul Grendler wrote on the schools of Renaissance Italy, and chose the same time boundaries as I did: 1300-1600.⁴⁷ He distinguishes three types of schools: those owned by the *commune* where the city-state founded and supervised the schools and appointed and paid the teacher; independent schools based on an agreement between a freelance teacher and (groups of) parents; and the schools belonging to churches or monasteries, that play no significant role after 1300: ‘The close association between church and school typical of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century England, and possibly elsewhere, did not prevail in the Italian peninsula’.⁴⁸ He points out that the specific needs of the Italian society of merchants created its own type of education. Both the communal and the private schools grew substantially in the fourteenth century and the system reached perfection in the fifteenth century, when education had become available to the majority of youngsters in Italian cities and was regularly provided to the underprivileged (orphans, foundlings, girls) as well. According to Grendler, the communes supported education because they believed that educating the young yielded civic and personal benefits; that is the reason why the cities paid the teachers.⁴⁹

Great Britain

For England, the work done by Arthur F. Leach at the dawn of the twentieth century⁵⁰ was taken up by Nicholas Orme, whose *Medieval Schools, from Roman Britain to Renaissance England*⁵¹ crowns his earlier work on the subject.⁵² A dense network of village schools and a comparable system of grammar schools in cities existed in what is now Great Britain – 253 schools are counted for medieval England.⁵³ Orme sketches the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as the period of changes in education, featuring the ‘growth of the secular schools and universities, the coming of the friars and the writings of the great mendicant scholars’ and the period until 1450 as the ‘formative age of the typical free grammar school’.⁵⁴ These urban schools were autonomous, public, and had specialized teachers, but they had no monopoly on education, however hard they tried. Besides these ‘principal, authorised or high schools’ there were side schools in private homes, monasteries, and the households of the noblemen, and French or business schools as well.⁵⁵ As elsewhere, the fifteenth century in Britain saw a growing interest of the authorities in education, and they endowed schools to make them accessible for free: nothing extraordinary so far in a European context, apart from the idea that Latin seems to have been equalled by the vernacular at school earlier than in the rest of Europe. And while humanism had a strong influence on education in Britain too, it was incorporated into an already existing English tradition, with the vernacular as a tool for learn-

45 *École au Moyen Âge* 2007: 29.

46 *École au Moyen Âge* 2007: 4.

47 Grendler 1989; see also Manacorda 1980.

48 Grendler 1989: 11.

49 Grendler 1989: 13.

50 Leach 1894 and 1915.

51 Orme 2006.

52 Orme 1973, 1984 and 1989.

53 Orme 1973: 294.

54 Orme 1984: 219 and 223.

55 Orme 1989: 6.

ing Latin; the first schoolbook printed in England was a Cato in both Latin and English published in 1477 by Westminster Press. Schools changed from the 1520s because of the Reformation, which in its turn was partly an effect of an increased level of education and intellectual awakening. Until 1520, those in power had been sure that the schools were on their side. Now, they started to exert extreme control over education, and many schools were closed when monasteries were dismantled. The first reformed king, Henry VIII, founded new schools, often reusing former Catholic buildings, and centralized the curriculum: by the 1540s school texts were becoming uniform, for instance with the implementation of a standard Latin and English grammar book.⁵⁶ In the sixteenth century, the upper classes who spoke mainly French and English rediscovered Latin, and it became fashionable and a goal in itself.⁵⁷ More than elsewhere in Europe, in England the medieval schools still live on, mostly because the system remained basically unchanged, with schools designed as large complexes of buildings reminiscent of monasteries, where pupils would not only attend lessons but live together as well. Many existing schools have been in use for over six or seven centuries, and many of the most prestigious primary and secondary boarding schools and even university colleges mirror those that were the standard in medieval Europe on the Continent as well.

Scandinavia

In a recent study of literacy in medieval Scandinavia, the period of c.1350-1530 is characterized, as in the rest of Northern Europe, by the decline of the power of the church and the rise of control wielded by the state, including over the educational system. 'In major Danish and Swedish towns schools teaching reading, writing and elementary arithmetic were available for all who could afford it. Young future merchants could continue their education in foreign towns, learn other languages and more specialized business correspondence. Youth aspiring to the priesthood could go on to cathedral schools and eventually attend university education abroad. Would-be clerks in the royal administration could start work immediately after leaving school, while those aiming higher could follow the clerical pattern and go to cathedral schools. Most of the highest offices were given to nobles, and the majority of them had received no more than an elementary private education; only a

ill. 9. *Grammar school in Ystad (Sweden), building from c.1450.*

© Riksantikvarieambetet
Lund, Thomas Hansson.



⁵⁶ Orme 2006: 308-309.

⁵⁷ Orme 1989: 15-19.

few went to university. For all these young men, a literate education was a means to obtaining a position giving power, a good income and prestige'.⁵⁸ Although the spread of cities was mainly limited to the southern parts of the Swedish kingdom, the pattern of schooling within these towns (ill. 9) does not seem to differ much from that in the Netherlands.

1.3 School in medieval Dutch literature

The image of schoolchildren that existed in the Middle Ages in the Netherlands can be deduced from texts as well as from images. In literary texts, that have received little or no attention from historians of education, pupils are also mentioned often and in all kinds of contexts. Many times, the references are simple and coincidental, and do not allow modern readers to draw conclusions. When in *Die Rose*, a Middle Dutch translation of the French *Roman de la Rose*, the allegorical figure 'False Face' dresses up as a schoolchild, nothing is said about the appearance of this disguise (alas). Still, this episode testifies that pupils were seen as a category recognizable by their clothes – just like nuns, knights, canons, clerks, schoolmasters and counts, some of the other types of people 'False Face' poses as⁵⁹ – and that it was thus possible to dress up in such a way that one would be mistaken for a pupil. Even this very short passage stresses that medieval people shared an impression of what a schoolchild looked like.

In his 1935 book about the child in medieval Dutch literature, B. van den Eerenbeemt produced a good chapter on education and schooling;⁶⁰ although a handful of original texts have come to light since then, his overview is still very serviceable. In the handbooks on schools in other European countries (see § 1.2), not much attention is devoted to medieval literature either, although at least in England and France good work has been done on children in Old-English and Old-French texts. But an overview of references to school in other vernaculars is not known to me.

School in manuals

In one of the popular manuals of the Dutch Middle Ages, *Der leken spiegel* (The lay mirror) written around 1330, the Antwerp city clerk Jan van Boendale included a chapter on the raising of children.⁶¹ After instructions for tender care and feeding of infants, two strophes consider the education and disciplining of children:

'Ten seveden jaren, zonder letten,
Salmen tkint ter scolēn setten,
Al en soudter niet an bliven,
Om lesen leren ende scriven;
Want en es knecht noch here,
Hine hebber af bate ende ere
Ende oec dicke groet gherief,
Can hi lesen enen brief.
Die tkint heeft inder hoeden,
Saelt houden onder der roeden,
Dwinghen met besceedenheden
Ende leren alle goede zeden.
Die wise Salomon seeght dit waert:
Hi haet sijn kint die de roede spaert.'

(At seven years old, without delay,
One should sent the child to school,
Even if it will not stay there,
To learn to read and write;
Because there is no servant or master,
Who cannot put to use and honour
And often much pleasure too,
If he can read a letter.
Who is in charge of the child,
Should keep it under the rod,
Force it with modesty,
And teach it all good manners.
The wise Solomon spoke this truth:
He hates his child, who spares the rod.)

58 Nedkvitne 2004: 237 and 240.

59 Verwijs 1868: 180 (verses 10487-10494): 'Want alte wale ic wisselen can / die cledre, die ic hebbe an. / Nu bem ic monec, nu bem ic nonne, / Nu bem ic riddre van hogen conne, / Nu bem ic canonec, nu prelaet, / Nu pape, nu clerc, nu advocaet; / Nu bem ic meester, alse nu scolier; / Nu bem ic borgrave, nu forestier.'

60 Van den Eerenbeemt 1935: Chapter 3 (p. 59-105).

61 'Hoemen kindre houden sal, ende wies jonghe liede pleghen selen' (How to keep children, and how young people should behave), Book III, Chapter 10 (Chapter 121 of whole work). See: De Vries 1848: vol. 3, p. 121; also: Jongen and Piers 2003: 162.

In the verses that follow, much more is said about those ‘good manners’ and about the contents of the education prescribed. Interestingly, education is presented as a number of choices: nobles should be taught to ride, or fight, but there is also the possibility of sending someone to school to learn ‘clergie’ (the writing business), or he could learn to trade, or a craft, and even the ‘noble handwork on the land’ is praised. And whatever children should choose to do, they should learn, and that learning never ends.⁶² This corresponds with the lines quoted above that stress that both servant and master would benefit from being able to read. The book is explicitly called ‘lay mirror’ and from that and from the contents of the chapter we can deduce that Boendale’s instructions for schooling were directed at a broad audience – not at nobility only, who of course would never end up as craftsmen, or working the fields.

The use of the rod for the betterment of the child is a recurrent theme in medieval manuals and is not limited to school. Parents are also generally advised to discipline their children.⁶³ In the *Boec van Seden* (Book of Manners) this is taken quite far:

‘Die spaert die roede, hi aet sijn kint:	(Who spares the rod, he hates his child.
Vrient, ne spare niet een twint,	Dear friend, do not spare it at all,
Dune scelds dijn kint, als het mesdoet,	So reprimand your child, when it does wrong,
Of slaet, of bluwet: het es hem goet’. ⁶⁴	or hit, or flog it: it does him good.)

Interestingly, for the upbringing of children in monasteries and convents, the older inhabitants are advised not to beat the children.⁶⁵ Still, in depictions of the education of young monks, teachers are shown holding and using the rod as generally as in the depictions of lay pupils. It seems that beating was seen as an acceptable way to correct children in the home and in the classroom, but less as an instrument in religious education.

In the *Spiegel der Sonden* (Mirror of Sins), the use of the rod specifically to get unwilling children to go to school, is linked to the notion that later on, they will understand why this was necessary:

‘Somen kinderen eist hart mede	(Some children do not willingly
Ter scholen ghaen in hare jonchede.	go to school when they are small.
Die roede moet se daer toe driven;	The rod should push them there.
Als sijt nochtan hantierende bliven,	But when they keep going to school,
Werden si blide mids der leringhen,	the education will make them happy,
Ende daer na derfmen se niet dwinghen’. ⁶⁶	and they do not need to be forced afterwards.)

In some of the moralizing texts, the pupils are addressed as a group, almost like a caste in society. This is the case in a *sproke*:

‘Bailluwen, wethouders ende jugen	(Bailliffs, aldermen and judges
Ende ghi scolieren die licht in stugen,	and all you pupils, who excel in study
Hout trecht ende die waerheit sterke.	Keep the law and the truth strongly.
[...]	[...]
Ghi scoliere, ionc ende cleene	All you pupils, young and small
Eert huwen meester, mint ende ontsiet:	honour your teacher, love and respect him:
Hier an moghedi verbueren niet’. ⁶⁷	this you must never disobey.)

62 De Vries 1848: vol. 3, 123–124.

63 Van den Eerenbeemt 1935: 67.

64 Suringar 1891: 12 (verses 409–412).

65 Van den Eerenbeemt 1935: 85–86.

66 Verdam 1900–1901: vol. I: 117 (verses 9175–9180).

67 Van den Eerenbeemt 1935: 97 and 378 (note 342).

Mirrors for children

The 1488 manual *Spiegel der Jongers* (Mirror of Youngsters) is, as its title indicates, directed to children specifically; in the beginning the poem says that it is named ‘Der kinderen spiegel’ (mirror of children) and at the end it addresses ‘u / kinder’ (you, children) again. Its recommendations for the youth are quite general and correspond largely to those in other mirrors. It says that children should be pushed to virtue when they reach the age of reason, that not wanting to learn is a disgrace, and knowing arts a great honour.⁶⁸ The text repeats the Ten Commandments in rhyme and suggests mostly obvious ways to live a modest and virtuous life, always aware of God and death. In some details, this mirror does seem to credit its specific audience, for instance, in its many references to wisdom, its hints for choosing friends and behaving in groups, and small things like the importance of getting up early in the morning. A striking detail: where in other manuals the unspoiled child is compared to a blank sheet or a new cooking pot, in this mirror the child’s character is compared to a writing tablet with a new and smooth layer (of wax) on it, into which both good and evil can be written.⁶⁹

The *Meliboeus* or *Het boec van troeste ende van rade* (Book of consolation and advice), written in the middle of the fourteenth century by Jan van Boendale, was meant for instruction, although scholars have noted that its subject matter, dealing with all kinds of marital conduct, does not seem to be too suitable for school-aged children – but that is a modern point of view. In its chapter on wisdom, the ‘*Meliboeus*’ has long paragraphs devoted to the things that students should know and to how pupils should behave – these categories are treated separately. For this book, the latter paragraph is most interesting. In ‘*Wat scolieren toe behoert*’ we read a list of suggestions for pupils’ conduct that sketches a quite recognizable life of school and study. Pupils should be quiet, like to study and contain their lust for unnecessary walks. They should have books, in which wisdom can be found. When they go to school (‘*scoliere die ter scolen gaet*’) they should remember what they are taught and be quiet when the teacher is talking. They should listen carefully, repeat what they learned and pay attention to details. But they should take breaks too, when they lay their books down, and do something else, to refresh their minds. The book stresses a kind of ‘life-long learning’.

At the end of the section, a good pupil learning to gain wisdom is compared to a swine searching for food:

‘Goede scolieren selen sijn
Erenstich als een swijn
Dat smorghens uut gaet
En[de] al den dach soeket sijn aet
Sonder rusten / dat es waer.
En[de] altoes leren hier en[de] daer
Dus selen clercken sijn die leren
Die hem ter wijsheyt willen keren’.⁷⁰

(Good pupils must be
diligent like a swine
that goes out in the morning
and all day searches for its food
Without resting, that is true.
And in that way learn here and there
Like that schoolboys should be who learn
And who want to turn to wisdom.)

Educating the special

In the Middle Ages, it seems that it was hard to find a child that loved going to school. If a child loved to study, it raised suspicion – that is why future saints and other exemplary children were portrayed in their *vitae* as preferring school to play. It stressed their extraordinariness, their differences from a ‘normal’ child. This is a

68 ‘Men sal die kinder tot duechde dwinghen / Wanneer si comen ten verstande; [...] Niet willen leeren is een schande / Consten te connen is groot eere’, see: *Spiegel der jongers* 1860: 2 (lines 13–18).

69 ‘Der kinder sinnen / diet wel grondeert / Sijn onbelast van eenighen bedrive / Ghelijck een tafel reyn gheplaneert / Daermen goet oft quaet in mach scriven’, see: *Spiegel der jongers* 1860: 4 (lines 69–72).

70 Snellaert 1869: 40–47 (‘*Meliboeus*’), Chapter C. XIII. ‘*Wat scolieren toe behoert*’, there lines 1283–1290 (p. 47).

topos in medieval *vitae*, indicating that in the minds of medieval people, it was well known that children did not like to go to school and used every excuse not to.

Schooling is mentioned often in hagiography, and because there are many female saints, these sources also indicate the possibilities for girls to receive an education, in the cloisters as well as among 'normal' schoolchildren: many future saints started their education attending regular schools, where they stood out for their knowledge and concentration. According to Thomas of Cantimpré, St. Lutgard attended a boarding school before entering a nunnery⁷¹ and Beatrijs of Nazareth, the main character of the early poem *Beatrijs*, had been to a mixed school when she was eight years old.⁷²

The descriptions of the lives of the Brethren of Common Life, within the Modern Devotion movement, are examples of hagiographic writing. They include many stories of diligent students (Melis van Buren), who do not like to play (Peter van Amsterdam, Arnold van Schoonhoven), who are even sad when lessons are cancelled (Gerard Zerbolt van Zutphen) and who keep extraordinary composure when treated unjustly:

'Op ene tijd sat ene van desen schoelres in die schoele ende screef; doe gevelt, dat daer twee ander kynder toe samen worstelden ende treeden desen gueden kynde in sine scrijft ende schoerden hem sijn boeck. Hiervan en waert hij niet gestuert; mer oetmoedelic op sine knyen vallende, baet hij hem verghifnisse, omdat hij hem in den wege geseeten hadde'.⁷³

(Once, one of these pupils was sitting in school, writing; then it happened that two other children were romping and stepped on the notebook of this good child and ripped his book. This did not disturb him; but falling to his knees humbly, he asked them forgiveness for sitting in their way).

The lives of the Sisters of Diepenveen and those of Deventer, both nunneries within the Modern Devotion, show a similar pattern, but here nuns teaching their younger sisters seem to be the rule, and schools are not mentioned as such. Many of the nuns whose exemplary lives were written down, taught young nuns, like Mette van Barchuys: 'When the young nuns ('zusterkens'), who were new, came to her, she used to teach them lots of good things'.⁷⁴ This could still be teaching in a private sphere, but in some cases a nun is called schoolmistress ('schoelmeystersche') and was clearly teaching larger groups of children, not necessarily only converts and not necessarily only girls. One faithful schoolmistress called Suster Dayken is said to teach and force the pupils well 'so that they walk into the choir like angels'; she is very disappointed when the children have fun, jump around and sing when she goes away and they remembered her punishment all their lives.⁷⁵

According to Van den Eerenbeemt, pupils are often mentioned in relation to Our Lady, who is called 'alre studenten meesterinne' (mistress of all students) by Dirc van Delf. Many Marian legends mention young, naive schoolchildren who have a special devotion for Mary, making her garlands of flowers and praying to her for assistance in their studies.⁷⁶ Such a preference could prompt families to send the child to a monastery, as in a legend: 'There was a young schoolboy ('scolierken') that felt a great devotion for Our Lady Mary [...] And when his parents saw that the child was this devoted, they presented it to a convent and made it a little monk ('monixken')'.⁷⁷ Mary herself had been an exemplary pupil as well: home-schooled by her mother Anne, she was brought to the temple at a young age, where according

71 Van den Eerenbeemt 1935: 75.

72 Van den Eerenbeemt 1935: 69.

73 See: Van den Eerenbeemt 1935: 101. The school equipment mentioned here is dealt with in Chapter 7.

74 'Als die jonge zusterkens, die corts gekomen weren, tot oer quamen, dan plach si hem veel guets te leeren.' Zusters van Deventer, quoted in: Van den Eerenbeemt 1935: 87 and 376 (footnote 281).

75 Zusters van Diepenveen, quoted in: Van den Eerenbeemt 1935: 69-70.

76 Van den Eerenbeemt 1935: 99-100.

77 'Het was een ionc scolierken dat had grote devocie tot onser liever vrouwen Maria [...] Ende doen sijn ouders saghen dat dit kijnt soe devoet was begaven sijt in een cloester ende si mactent een monixken.' Legend 'Van onser vrouwen Hoet', cited in: Van den Eerenbeemt 1935: 79 and 374 (footnote 231).



ill. 10. *Christ among the Doctors and Christ reading while his mother is knitting, two scenes on a quadriptych by Simon Bening, 1520s. Baltimore, Walters Art Gallery, inv. no. W.442. Photo taken from: Kren and McKendrick 2003: 146.*

to apocryphal writings she was instructed with other girls. The Bible says she was reading when the angel Gabriel announced the birth of Christ to her.

The infancy of Christ was a popular subject in medieval literature as well as in medieval art (see § 4.3). The lengthy poem *Vanden levene ons heren* (About the life of Our Lord), written by an unknown author in the second half of the thirteenth century and very popular throughout the Later Middle Ages, is a striking example of such works. Like the visual imagery of this period and region, this text pictures the Christ child as a normal child, and Mary as a faithful mother (ill. 10). Such depictions must have given room for identification with the pair to those who read or heard the poem – one of the reasons of its popularity. A number of verses recount the childhood of Christ in Egypt, mentioning his play: ‘Daert metten kindren spelen ginc / Ne gheen soe scone was inden rinc’ (When he went playing with other children / not one so handsome was between them) and the fruits of his education: the child Jesus spoke every language: ‘Hi conste fransoeys, dietsch ende latijn’ (He knew French, Dutch and Latin). In his enthusiasm, the author gives away his idea of a polyglot.

In medieval literature it is generally assumed that individuals already as children had the character traits that would make them famous, not only future saints but kings and villains as well. Therefore, in romances describing the life of kings and knights, their schooling is a theme; schoolchildren appear in *Floris ende Blancefloer* and also in the tales featuring Arthur, Percival, and Alexander the Great.

Schoolchildren in miracle books

In the Middle Ages, in the case of accidents, sickness, and death, there was a thin line between human and divine intervention. People sought the assistance of the law or of saints and relics of good reputation equally. For medical emergencies, a doctor was called, but at the same time the help of Mary was beseeched. When the story had a happy ending, the result was usually attributed to the supernatural assistance. When everything failed, and someone died, a case might end up in court. It is no surprise that cases of successful intervention by a miracle-performing image

or relic were recorded with the same accuracy as court cases, and in much the same manner. As proof of the miracles, they were used as legitimization of the cult.

The 'minutes' of the church were books with miracles. Fourteen of these 'mirakelboeken' or 'wonderboeken' from the Netherlands have so far been edited or studied, but more must exist and only await unveiling. In each of these books, miracles were recorded following a formula. But within this formula, the miracle stories are remarkably precise because the incident had to be recorded in such a way as to be seen to be as 'credible' and 'controllable' as possible. Therefore many details were noted.

In all the miracle books that have been studied, a substantial part (40 percent) of the miracles recorded involved children: some who recovered from a severe illness or accident or others who came back to life after drowning. Their age is usually recorded extremely precisely (in years, months and days) and the facts of the matter are described in full. Because the parents came with witnesses and told the story to an adult who wrote it down, the writings about such miracles permit insight into the way grown-ups thought about children and how they handled them.⁷⁸

In a few of these stories, school or items of school equipment are mentioned. In one case, a child was on his way to school when something happened: 'a son of 15 years who went to school'.⁷⁹ In another case, the way schoolchildren behave in groups is recalled in an indulgent way, to explain why a child was far from home when the accident occurred: 'that had gone to get rush with others as schoolchildren tend to do'.⁸⁰ In two cases, casting-counters, used for practising maths (see § 2.4) were swallowed by children. A child named Ghiben, six years old, born in Abbenbroek, while playing with other children put a casting-counter in his mouth, 'as children do'. The counter got stuck in his throat and nearly killed him.⁸¹ The same happened to a child in Amersfoort who swallowed a copper casting-counter and had it in his stomach for two years before he was able to spit it out at the intercession of Our Lady.⁸² A final hint of education – of females – is given by a miracle recounting the exploits of a twelve-year-old girl who is able to read something that nobody else could decipher.⁸³

Instructing the masters

The *Reghel der Duytsche Schoolmeesters*, written by Dirck Adriaensz Valcoogh and published in Amsterdam in 1591, is an extraordinary text in many ways.⁸⁴ A schoolmaster himself in the small village of Barsingerhorn, as stated on the title page, Valcoogh wrote in fact a manual for village schoolmasters of 'Duytsche' scholen, schools where primary and/or secondary education was given in the vernacular. But the manual takes the form of poems, with even the most practical indication put neatly into paired rhymes, and cannot be viewed outside the tradition of the chambers of rhetoric that flourished at the end of the sixteenth century.

In his 'Voorreden' (introduction) Valcoogh says he wrote his text because he noticed how rough and stupid many of the village schoolmasters were in his time:

'Als ick aenmerckte de plompheyt ende onghelcertheyt die dagelycx wort gheuseert by den Hollantschen, Vriesschen, ende Zeeusschen Schoolmeesteren, die Prochie-Kercken bedienden: want die slechts een naem conde schryven, ende een Psalm onstichtelycken singhen, begaven hen terstont

(When I noticed the rudeness and lack of knowledge that is practised daily by the schoolmasters of Holland, Friesland and Zeeland, who serve the parish churches: for he who could only write a name, and sing a psalm in an impious way, went to keeping school immediately, and wanted

78 For an overview of the Dutch miracle books and their implications see: Willemsen 1998: 31–41.

79 '[...] soen van xv iaeren ter schoelen gaen', see: Lukkenae 1946: 153.

80 '[...] ende was ghegaen omme bies metten anderen also scoel kindere pleghen', see: *Guldenboek* 1989: B.

81 'Een kint Ghiben ghenaempt ses Jaeren out / gheboren binnen Abbenbroeck spelende met d'andere kinderen heeft eenen reken penninck soo de kinderen pleghen / in sijnen mont ghesteken / deswelckers door ongheluck / inde keele gheschoten', see: Graas 1987: 36, based on: I. Stratijs, *Onse L. Vrouwe der Seven Weeën*, Antwerpen 1622 (Utrecht, University Library, Collectie Thomassen, Weert voh 48/310, f 126–128).

82 '[...] kijndt [...], dat een coopere leck pennijnck ij iaer in zijn maghe gedragen had', see: Lukkenae 1946: 142.

83 Verhoeven 1992: 208 (miracle performed by Our Lady of Sorrows, between 1503 and 1519).

84 Edited (using the Alkmaar 1607 edition) by Schotel 1875.

totten School-dienste, ende wilden terstont
groote Meesters zyn, daer sy noch geen
Clercken mochten strecken.’

to be great masters instantly, but they
could not even serve as clerks).

He partly blames the villages for this, as they often choose a cheap schoolmaster, but sees this as a very bad thing, for it would damage the whole community if the children were not educated well:

‘Al soude de gantsche ghemeente ende plecke
daerom interesten en schade lijden ende haer
lieve kinderken in eeuweghe onwetendheyt
van lesen ende schrijven blijven.’

(Even if the whole parish and place suffer
loss and damage for that and her sweet
children stay in eternal ignorance from
reading and writing).

Valcoogh’s rhyming manual is remarkably detailed, and contains practical and moral instructions on almost anything a schoolmaster could encounter, from a detailed list of the equipment he should have (quoted as a whole in § 7.3) and a full calendar to instructions for repairing the clock and recipes for preparing ink, including luminous ink that can be read in the dark and invisible ink that can only be read after a written sheet is wetted or burned.⁸⁵ The rhyming of the texts is bad, Valcoogh says himself, but is targeted toward schoolchildren (‘om den jonghen Scholieren wille’) who like and remember poetry better. The added prayers, poems, proverbs and moral rhymes can be used by the schoolmasters to make exercises for their pupils.⁸⁶

Foremost, Valcoogh’s ideal schoolmaster is a ‘sachtmoedigh’ (meek) man, relating to his pupil like a good father to his child; he is advised not to beat the children so hard ‘datse bloeden, of de leden breken’ (that they bleed, or break their limbs) and only use ‘plack ende roeden’ (paddle and rod) for punishment because otherwise he will fall into disgrace with the village.⁸⁷ When children are new at school and still afraid, he should not beat them at all, even if they run and jump around the school sometimes (‘al tuymelense al springense eens langs ter scholen’), but in the second or third month he can begin to softly use his ‘handtplackens’ (hand paddle, ill. 11), at the same time when they begin to hold their pens (‘hun penneken in de handt vaten’). He is instructed on how to teach and test pupils in various ways, indicating large and diverse school populations: how to teach writing to a pupil who can read in a month’s time, how to hear the lessons of 100 pupils in two hours in an orderly way, or those of 400 pupils (!) in one day – the latter is done with some assistance.⁸⁸

He also describes at length the dress, equipment and behaviour of pupils, the way they should sit in class and behave at the table, the heating and lighting of the classroom, when pupils should be given time off and what games they should play, and a detailed programme of desirable competitions among the schoolchildren and the appropriate prizes to be awarded – Valcoogh even put the programme of a school day to rhyme.⁸⁹ The information hidden in this rhetorical verse is immense, and I gratefully used it in my reconstruction of daily life at school at the end of the period studied (see Chapter 7).

In parts of his work, Valcoogh’s book closely resembles the manuals known from earlier Middle-Dutch literature. One of his moral poems, ‘Acht Punten ende Dueghden, die een Schoolkindt behoort te kennen’ (Eight points and virtues that a

ill. 11. *Paddle from the cesspit of a churchmaster in Oldenzaal, 1525-1585. Oldenzaal, City Hall. © Author.*



85 Schotel 1875: 94-95 (inks).

86 Schotel 1875: III-IV (of the edited text).

87 Schotel 1875: 7, 51, and 10.

88 Schotel 1875: 17-18 and 31-33.

89 Schotel 1875: 118 (school day poem).

schoolchild should know) neatly and uninspiringly sums up in eight lines the ideal schoolchild:

‘Acht puncten staen tot een School-kindt; Vroegh op staen, ende ter Scholen ghesint, T’hayr te kemmen, ende wasschen die handen, Godt bidden, dat hy ghenade seynd in dees landen, Vlytigh gaen in leeringhe alle daghen, Behouden dat den Meester gaet voordraghen, Hebbend Godes vrucht in alle dinghen, Soo en behoeft die Meester niet seer dringen.’	(Eight points suit a schoolchild well: Get up early, and motivated for school, Comb your hair, and wash your hands, Pray to God, to send mercy in these lands Be diligent in learning every day, Remember what the master recites, Act pious in everything, Then the master does not have to press).
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Of course, there were no ideal schoolchildren. On the contrary, it was common knowledge in the Later Middle Ages that children as a rule hated school, as is clear from the poem *Van dinghen die selden gheschien* (On things that are seldom found) of c.1460:

‘Ionghe kinder van sulker sede Datsi gheerne ter scholen gaen Dit vintmen selden sonder waen’. ⁹⁰	(Young children of the kind that like to go to school is surely something rarely found).
--	--

1.4 School in Latin school texts

The language of the school in the Middle Ages and the sixteenth century was Latin. To simplify the learning of this language, sets of *colloquia* were created, consisting of sentences in simple Latin that could be used for practicing dialogue. A specific genre, more exercise than literature, they have occasionally been studied, but mainly for their famous authors and rarely within the context of education. They deserve special attention in this book, as remarkable echoes of daily life in and around schools can be found in them. They were often written by schoolmasters themselves, who seem to have included references to the pupils’ world to appeal to them. Collections of these dialogues were passed from one schoolmaster to another, and were sometimes gathered into manuscripts or printed books. More often these exercises were only noted down by pupils on tablets, slates or in notebooks; these were not meant to last, but some survived as waste in cesspits or were reused as binding material of books. The last page of a school text of Torrentinus, printed in Zwolle around 1505, contains such a handwritten dialogue, whose author remains unknown. Two schoolboys, one Syriscus and one Petrellus, talk about ‘boys’ things’ and they mention many objects; Petrellus wants to play with nuts that he has bought by illegally pawning his writing tablet. At the end of the conversation, the church bell strikes three and they head for school: ‘Ad scholam, ne? (To school?)’, asks the first. The other replies: ‘Immo, ad carcerem’ (Yes indeed, to the dungeon).⁹¹

School *colloquia* have been known as early as the eleventh century, but they became more common in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when many a grammar teacher composed his own, and relatively more were preserved because they found their way into print. Colloquia composed by, for instance, Juan Luis Vives, Mosellanus (Peter Schade), Adrianus Barlandus, and Cornelius Crocus have

⁹⁰ Preserved in the so-called ‘Geraardsbergse handschrift’, see: Govers et al 1994: 51.

⁹¹ Kronenberg 1923; Hermans 2008.



ill. 12. Erasmus at his desk, drawing by Holbein in copy of Praise of Folly, Basel 1515/1516. Basel, Prints Room, inv.no. 1662.166. Photo taken from: Jensma et al 1986: 145.

been preserved,⁹² and some were written by authors in the rest of Europe as well. But the most famous example is the book of scholarly conversations published in 1523 by Erasmus of Rotterdam, the *Familiarium Colloquia Formulae*.

Erasmus (ill. 12) seems to have taken to heart the specific interests of the schoolboys, his intended audience, and the themes of the conversations are therefore daily life at school and especially the games that were played between the lessons: the sections bear headings such as 'de pila' (on the ball) and 'de tali' (on knucklebones). The familiar themes, however, cannot conceal the considerable amount of sophisticated knowledge hidden in the questions and answers. The

⁹² Nauwelaerts 1945: 36.

conversations are prefaced by a dialogue on play more generally, which gives a familiar impression of schooldays, starting with: 'For some time the atmosphere, the sky and the day invite us to play', answered by: 'In fact, everything invites us to it, only the teacher does not invite us'.⁹³

In spite of their charm and best intentions, the *Colloquia* of Erasmus were banned by the Sorbonne in 1526, and subsequently prohibited for use in schools in Rome and put on the *Index* by the Papal authority, a decision confirmed by the Council of Trent (1545-1563). In the Netherlands, they were prohibited in 1562. The reason was that the texts were judged to be immoral and impious. In his reaction, the *Apologia*, Erasmus proves for every *colloquium* that his critics are wrong. Indeed, he is strongly opposed to the influence of women, and pupils are not to touch dice or playing cards. Erasmus had every reason to defend his *colloquia*: they were very successful, reprinted often and used widely in schools, they served a good cause, and moreover Erasmus had much enjoyed writing them. When he recommended the reading of his *Colloquia* to his own godchild Joannes Erasmius Froben, he confessed: 'It seemed to us that while we were adapting style and sentences to your early age, we were for a long time young again for your sake'.⁹⁴

In England, some personal notebooks of teachers and pupils have been preserved, and they too contain sets of sentences, in this case usually pairs of Latin and English ones. These translation sentences are important sources for the material culture of English schools, as they 'reveal the master himself, his duties and status, the pupils, their families and prospective careers, classroom procedures and customs, common objects and everyday events, and even social problems such as shortage of food, epidemics, crime and war. Some of these topics are recorded elsewhere, but their presence in the schoolroom helps to show their impact on society. Other material like temporary clichés, scraps of songs and items of children's lore is unique to these notebooks and therefore irreplaceable'.⁹⁵

1.5 Archaeological sources

None of the studies of medieval schools to date have taken the viewpoint of school's daily reality, and objects are almost never seen as a source of information. One of the reasons for this lack of attention to tangible materials is that most historians are not familiar with objects or excavations, as multidisciplinary work involving both 'mud diggers' and 'archive tigers' is still rare and usually instigated by the archaeologists who want written evidence, not the other way around. But some historians do know the potential of objects, and as Nicholas Orme's 2001 book on medieval children⁹⁶ did include some images of toys and other child equipment, chosen with the help of the staff of the Museum of London, it remains a mystery why his 2006 book on medieval schools⁹⁷ does not depict a single school object, even more so because the same Museum of London has an outstanding collection of writing materials, including the largest collection of excavated hornbooks known to me. And to depict them in publications would be no more than a start: objects deserve to be at the basis of the analysis, as direct material sources and not as illustrations only.

Not only images of the tangible objects themselves, but the whole material culture of education is largely absent from the history of schools. With the subject of education, as with many other subjects relating to daily life, especially that of children, this is an opportunity missed. For the extant textual sources on these

93 Thompson 1965: 22-30 (various sports) and 432-441 (games with knucklebones).

94 Bot 1955: 213-217.

95 Orme 1989: 75-76.

96 Orme 2001.

97 Orme 2006.

subjects are largely ‘second-hand’: they were written down by adults, who had their own agendas. Of course, archaeological material may not be easily accessible – for this study, I did go out and see it all for myself, as most of it was not published and maybe never will be – and historians may need specialist help in ‘furnishing’ objects from the soil. And critics are right: these sources have their own ‘manual’ – as does every other source. But archaeology does have one advantage: it is a first-hand source. The objects excavated come directly from children’s hands. If only for that, the inclusion of object analysis in historic studies does deserve some extra effort.

An added motivation might be that archaeological sources tend to correct and nuance the image we get from texts and works of art, especially because those forms of expression are largely tied to the powerful and wealthy in society, while archaeology digs into the household remains of all social groups. It provides evidence on individuals of every status, gender, and age, and not at their best, but at their worst: reconstructing their material culture from what they could throw away. Archaeology thus has a welcome tendency of misrepresenting the ‘low’ instead of the ‘high’, and in many cases the inclusion of excavated remains can ‘average out’ the overall impression.

Medieval urban archaeology

In using objects from the Middle Ages as a source of information, it is important to realise that most of them did not survive the intervening centuries. Many items used by pupils and teachers in the Middle Ages were made of perishable materials like wood, leather and textile. If not worn to a thread in the first place, these would be reused or thrown into the fire. If they did end up in waste pits or were lost, the material would decay quickly. Only in very exceptional circumstances, can objects made of organic materials survive over five centuries in the ground. This means that we have at the best a permillage (not even a percentage) of what was once there. This is also the reason that we cannot strive for anything like a ‘random sample survey’. As things normally get lost, it is already significant if a single example of something did survive.

In the Netherlands, a relatively high groundwater level is combined with a relatively early urbanization. Therefore in the cities, especially in the western part of the Northern Netherlands, there were exceptionally favourable circumstances for the preservation of organic materials, like the waterlogged cesspits behind town houses (and schools). It is one of just a few regions in Europe where medieval and later wooden, leather and textile objects are in abundance. This in itself would have been a good reason to choose the Netherlands as a starting point for this book. But exceptional circumstances occurred in other regions as well, as is shown by the extraordinary ‘concealed finds’ from Germany (see § 3.7) where dry layers conserved leather, textile and even paper objects from medieval schools. And lucky finds of preserved school equipment are recorded in almost every country (ills. 13 & 14).

Medieval and post-medieval archaeology are relatively young branches within the archaeological discipline. They flourished earlier in some countries than in others, and their largest successes were often due to a lucky combination of three factors: the specific interests of a certain archaeologist or other person, the presence of a good medieval assemblage, and the absence of something considered more important. For instance, in Italy, but in the Netherlands as well, Roman remains were considered more important than medieval ones, and therefore the upper layers

ill. 13. Various medieval objects for reading and writing, excavated in Sweden: styluses, writing tablet, inkwell, book mounts, pricker, 'book tweezers' and glasses. Stockholm, National Historical Museum.
© Author.



ill. 14. Various medieval objects for reading and writing, depicted in the study of St. Jerome in the S. Nicolò in Treviso. Fresco, Tomaso da Modena, 1352-1354.
© Author.



containing everything post-R
Well into the 1970s, medieval j y pa
scientists, although these collections often eventually ended up in museums.

Most of the finds discussed in Chapter 2 and all the excavations dealt with in Chapter 3 were done in towns, mostly in the past 25 years. This study owes a considerable debt to urban archaeology and to the networks of municipal

archaeological services that exist in most European countries. Urban archaeology is an essentially post-war branch of archaeology, the development of which was sketched as an introduction to the overview of objects recovered from the city centre of Amsterdam in 1977.⁹⁸ It is based on the fact that cities, staying in the same place for a long time, gradually build up layers of waste, on which they stand: their whole history is in their soil. Much of the recent Malta Treaty on the preservation of archaeological information was designed to deal with the many interventions in the soils of the strongly urbanized territories of the European countries, and it aims not only to secure on-site preservation or excavation but the analysis and publication of the results as well. This book again will show that many older excavations and indeed most older finds have been published incompletely or not at all, and in that way to date they have filled more boxes in storerooms than gaps in knowledge.

Limitations

In 2002, Kristina Krüger wrote a PhD-thesis on the archaeological proof for the use of books and writing in Germany, the Netherlands, and Denmark.⁹⁹ She drew up an inventory of mainly hundreds of writing pegs, writing tablets, and fragments of books, but included many associated finds like glasses, inkwells and paddles as well. I gratefully used her inventory for this book. At the same time, I noticed that her inventory of finds in the Netherlands, based on a handful of publications and some information supplied by individuals, shows only the tip of the iceberg: for the Later Middle Ages, it includes mainly the finds from Amsterdam as published in 1977,¹⁰⁰ the book fragments from the castle at Eindhoven,¹⁰¹ and some city centre finds from The Hague and Utrecht. All Dutch school assemblages in my Chapter 3, most of them holding more writing material than in the whole inventory, were unknown to Krüger. This makes the survey maps with the distribution of the finds over the three countries pretty useless. Krüger cannot be blamed for this; it is hard to gain access to unpublished finds, especially for a foreigner, and a complete overview is impossible anyway, not only because the material is so scattered, but because new objects are found all the time.

I therefore chose a modest approach for my study. I know I have not seen everything, not even in the Netherlands, and I expect there are excavated school assemblages in Europe I am not aware of – some still awaiting discovery; for instance, in Dordrecht the city grammar school is still in the ground – and definitely more reading and writing objects await discovery too. I have concentrated on the ‘closed finds’, the whole assemblages of objects from school-bound sites. They have not been presented before and offer the best record of late-medieval school life when put in the context of contemporary ideas and images. In my typological survey (Chapter 2) I simply chose good examples, touching on large and/or significant groups of objects and I tried to add a European perspective when possible. I am indebted to a large number of archaeologists, curators and collectors in the Netherlands, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Scandinavia for their assistance and information, and for allowing me access to ‘their’ finds.

1.6 Iconographical sources

Material culture is much more than tangible objects. It is ‘the relation of man to the objects in his (everyday) environment’,¹⁰² the whole system of people using things and the way they shape their lives by surrounding themselves with objects.

98 Baart et al 1977.

99 Krüger 2002.

100 Krüger 2002: 160-161, 191, 204-205 and 235, based on Baart et al 1977.

101 Krüger 2002: 211-214 (book mounts) and 231, based on Arts 1992.

102 Janssen 1983: 178.



Therefore the way objects were handled and regarded also has to be studied. As the objects themselves do not give away thoughts or meanings, the occurrence of objects in contemporary images and texts should always be an important part of research based on material culture.

Although images, especially miniatures from manuscripts, are omnipresent in recent books on medieval schools, they are almost always used as little more than illustrations to a text that was conceived without them. A few have even become 'stock images', used without regard to their origin and the context in which they functioned. For instance, despite their continental origin, images from a Flemish and a Northern Netherlandish manuscript (see my ill. 106 & ill. 15) were chosen for the cover of Nicholas Orme's book on medieval schools in England. Indeed, most images in his book are either French or Flemish. I do understand they are used to embellish, but that means the information they carry is neglected, or even misunderstood: the dress on the front and the teacher's attributes on the back of the book may well never have been encountered in schools on the other side of the Channel.

In handbooks, there is a strong tendency to use the same images again and again, especially those taken from Flemish and French manuscripts and made accessible through the work of, for instance, Nicholas Orme and Danièle Alexandre-Bidon, with a painting here and there. These are beautiful images, but they are not the only ones, and I hope that this book may act as propaganda not only for the use of real objects as sources, but for the study of other types of art, like woodwork, stained glass and decorative arts as well.

In this book, works of art, often of outstanding quality, are used basically as sources. Their details are quoted like words in texts, containing information of the same level, at least when all their own problems of interpretation are considered. As works of art are not 'medieval photos', they have to be 'read' and interpreted, and the intentions of the artist and the patron have to be taken into account, as well as technical limitations and stylistic conventions. In other words, they have to be used carefully – but then again, written sources also require close treatment because their authors and commissioners had agendas as well. In my opinion, written documents are not more 'true' than images; they just use other tools for ventilating their makers' views on reality. When used sensibly, both images and texts can give context to real objects.

Objects are almost never the main theme of the images and texts in which they occur. On the contrary, in most cases we will be focussing on very small details of paintings, sculptures, miniatures and prints. These details are what artists drew or sculpted as part of their routine and mastery, and therefore it is in the details that artists reveal the customs, taste and fashion of their own times, even when they intended to show an episode of long-forgotten days. Therefore, the smallest details of artworks are often the parts that turn out to be most true to nature. When confronted with preserved objects, the details of school scenes in art of all kinds proved to be very realistic indeed.

School scenes identified

Before the inventory of school scenes that formed the basis of Chapters 4 to 6 could be drawn up, it was necessary to establish which images showed scenes of education. Many of the images resembling a lesson show an adult speaking to one or more listeners. Not all of these images depict a teacher and a pupil. To avoid

LEFT PAGE:

ill. 15. *School in the Hours of Catherine of Cleves, Utrecht, c.1450. New York, The Morgan Library, M.917, f 62r.*
© Morgan Library.

PREVIOUS PAGES:

ill. 16. *School illustrating the headword 'ars' in the fourteenth-century Omne Bonum. London, British Library, ms Royal 6 E VI, f 138v. © British Library.*

ill. 17. *Punishment of pupil illustrating the headword 'castigare' in the fourteenth-century Omne Bonum. London, British Library, ms Royal 6 E VI, f 214r. © British Library.*

interpreting all depictions of a 'scholar' telling somebody something as a school scene, I have studied some manuscripts that contain more than one of these scenes. A good example is the famous fourteenth-century encyclopaedia *Omne Bonum* in the British Library¹⁰³ that holds depictions of men in cloaks and hats speaking to various numbers of people in all kinds of entries (see fig. II). The style of the miniatures is quite schematic and the background, furnishings and attributes of the scenes have been minimized. Because the illustrations are identified by the heading (and the text), this sober execution makes it even more interesting to see how essential differences were achieved.

Page	Header	Translation	Elements illustration
ms Royal 6 E VI, pars I			
f 7r	Addiscere?	to learn	Solomon, cloak, crown, speaking gesture, rod + two auditors, book
f 59r	Assistens	assistant	pupil, beret, rod
f 138v	Ars sive artes	art or arts	man, cloak, lectern, book + 9 auditors, book
f 214r	Castigare	to punish	man, beret, rod + 5 auditors, book / beating, bared, held
ms Royal 6 E VI, pars II			
f 320v	Cognicio Dei	knowledge	man, seated, cloak, lectern, book + 3 auditors, speaking
f 452r	Cura	pastoral care	man, upper half, hat, lectern, book + 1 small auditor
f 452r	Curator	caretaker	man, seated, cloak, speaking gesture + 6 auditors of which 3 small
f 523v	Discere	to learn	man, seated, beret, speaking + auditor, kneeled, tablet
f 524v	Discipulus	student	man, upper half, rod + 1 small person
f 541r	Doctrina	teachings	man, seated, cloak, beret, lectern, book + 7 auditors, sit/stand
	sive doctor	or doctor	
ms Royal 6 E VII, pars I			
-			
ms Royal 6 E VII, pars II			
f 283r	Inquisicio	inquisition	man, seated, cloak, beret, speaking + auditor, points at man, beard
f 296r	Instrumenti	instrument	man, seated, cloak, jabot + auditor, kneeled, document, seal
	sive carta	or chart	
f 345r	ludere	to judge	man, seated, cloak, head covered, rostrum + auditor, tied, held
f 443r	Maceracio carnis	mortification	man, seated, cloak, beret, lectern, book + 10 auditors, bench, books
f 444r	Magister	school master	man, seated, hood, lectern, book, rod + 2 auditors, beating, held

Fig. II. *Entries and illustrations in the Omne Bonum encyclopaedia.*

The text under the heading 'Magister' begins as follows:

'Magister [pl:] magi[stri] in scholis potest facere collectam de suis scolariis[us].'	(Master or masters in schools can ask money from their pupils).
--	--

The word 'school' is mentioned a few more times later on. If not from the word 'Magister' itself, from this explanation we can be sure that the illustration provided is meant to be a school scene. So, we see a teacher holding a rod, punishing one of his pupils who is held to that end by another pupil (ill. 17). Not the teaching, but the disciplining is chosen as typical and the image of the teacher is most like the one illustrating 'Castigare', to punish.

Four more illustrations indicate the punishing of pupils by the use or presence of a rod: the depiction of Solomon teaching at 'Addiscere' (to learn), 'Castigare'

¹⁰³ London, British Library, mss Royal 6 E VI-6 E VII, see: Freedman Sandler 1996.

(to punish), ‘Discipulus’ (pupil) and, interestingly, the ‘Assistens’ that may thus be interpreted as a class assistant or usher. The transfer of learned knowledge, as meant with ‘ars’ (ill. 16), ‘cognicio’, ‘doctor’ and ‘maceracio’ was treated differently. From all these images the rod and punishment are missing, the ‘speaker’ is reading from a book, and the audience is usually large and well equipped with writing or reading implements. These scenes may be read as classes of students or disciples taught by a scholar. Different again are the situations where justice is administered, as with the entries on inquisition and judging: there is no rod and no book, the authority of the ‘speaker’ is indicated (by *rostrum*, jabot etc.) and on the side of auditor something is happening. Finally, when someone is dictating in this manuscript, there is just one auditor, and he is writing.

Series of teaching scenes can also be found in many other encyclopaedic manuscripts, like copies of *De proprietatibus rerum* or *Les proprietes des choses*, in Dutch *Van den propieteyten der dinghen* (On the nature of things) by Barthelomeus Anglicus.¹⁰⁴ A universal feature of these encyclopaedias is that punishment was seen as a characteristic of school. In all images of teachers, the ‘plak’ or the rod are the typical attributes of a schoolmaster. If not recognizable by this, many of the teachers could be mistaken for scholars in general. By comparing images within a manuscript, in combination with the matching text, the depictions of someone preaching to adults, a scholar dictating to a clerk and even a professor instructing students could be distinguished from a schoolmaster teaching children. Based on this, I decided to use the characteristic attributes of the teacher as decisive, when the context was not sufficient: when someone speaking to listeners holds a ‘plak’ or rod, the situation is meant to be a school.

Limitations

Just as it is impossible to have seen all archaeological finds, I am well aware that I have not seen every image of a school or a lesson. Moreover, within the range of this book, I can only present a small sample of the art works that I did see, and include images of an even smaller part. Therefore, I chose a modest approach in this field as well, where I have selected the contexts in which school scenes appear often (and more than elsewhere) as a framework. Within these themes, I have picked the best examples, drawn from all over Europe – but always starting from the Low Countries – and wherever possible chose to focus on the depictions that tell most about the material culture of school. This focus applies to my handling of textual sources as well.

104 For instance: London, British Library, ms Royal 17 E. III, on folios 36r, 45r, 80r, 93v, 119r, 136v, 145r, 148r, 166r, 209r, 297r and 314r.



ill. 18. *Hornbook excavated in Utrecht, fifteenth century.*
Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, inv.no. F 5822. © BVB.

ill. 19. *Hornbook found in Southwark, sixteenth century. London, Museum of London, inv.no. A 4672. © Author.*

ill. 20. Worn knob on the backside of
hornbook holding sheet music.
London, British Museum,
inv.no. 1937.1108-1. © Author.



THE MATERIAL CULTURE OF EDUCATION

The material culture of education includes all objects used in school, for the varied tasks and actions undertaken by pupils and masters in the process of learning and teaching. That means it includes items for reading, writing, counting, and punishment. These objects are well-known from depictions and excavations, and frequently mentioned in texts as well; they are best understood when the sources are combined. This combination also gives us the opportunity to see how the objects found were used and thought of, and to judge the accuracy of the depictions of the objects in art. The lion's share of the objects used in school were not exclusively used in that context, but were associated with writers and readers more generally. This justifies a concise overview of the range of items, their functions, and their occurrence in both the archaeological spectrum and the world of art. What these objects tell us about daily life at school, will be dealt with in Chapter 7.

2.1 Learning the alphabet

Hornbook

The wooden tablet with a handle containing the alphabet or other basic texts is usually called by its English name, 'hornbook', because of the transparent sheet of horn that covered the written or printed sheet on the tablet. A hornbook from the fifteenth century was excavated in 1982 in the inner city of Utrecht (ill. 18).¹ It is a small wooden tablet measuring 6.8 x 9.4 cms, with a 4.2-cms-long handle that has a hole for suspending it from a cord or strap. It was once covered with a sheet of horn, of which only small pieces remain. These are fastened along the rims of the tablet with metal strips held in place by iron nails.

The idea of the hornbook² is that a sheet of parchment or paper was displayed safely on a small board that could be handled and carried by the child itself. Most hornbooks that have come down to us are from the sixteenth century or later, and they usually display a printed sheet with a basic alphabet and the first prayers to be learned, the Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary (ill. 19). The alphabet is preceded by a cross that indicates that the child should make the sign of the cross before beginning. Some of the earliest hornbooks have a sheet with a calligraphy alphabet on parchment, or a simple printed alphabet embellished by written larger characters in a contrasting colour. The wooden board is usually covered with leather glued to the surface; on the back, the leather is sometimes stamped with a decoration.³ Not all hornbooks hold an alphabet; one of eight preserved in a London collection displays, inside a frame with the characters of the alphabet, the printed sheet music

1 Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, inv.no. F 5822; see also: Willemsen 2008.

2 See: Tuer 1896.

3 London, Museum of London inv.no. A 12028 is stamped with a double-headed eagle; the hornbook with inv. no. OA 9184 in the British Museum can be dated to the period 1660-1685 because of the stamped depiction of Charles II on horseback indicated 'C II'.

of a hymn; this was the hornbook of a chorister. On the backside is a metal rhomb with a very worn-down knob (ill. 20); here you would place your index finger to keep the hornbook up – it is still easiest to handle that way.

The hornbook was basically a tool for learning to read, a carry-on smudge-proof version of the alphabet-pages in manuscript and printed primers with the same contents. Depending on its precise design and finish, the hornbook could be used not only for learning to read, but for the first practice of writing too. If the characters of the alphabet were big enough, as they were on most medieval handwritten hornbooks, a child could trace the characters with its finger, a thin stick, a slate pencil or a writing peg. Wear and tear on some of the excavated hornbooks indicates that they were probably used in this way, and were certainly used intensively.

Hornbooks have been depicted often being carried by children themselves. The hornbook was a specific tool for learning the first basics and therefore destined for children who started school. That is why it is often depicted as the only thing carried by children who are brought to school, or going to school, for the first time. An alphabet tablet with a handle is presented to a pupil as an invitation to enter the study of grammar in Gregor Reisch's *Margarita Philosophica*, printed in 1508 (see ill. 5); the pupil can be recognized by his hat and schoolbag.⁴ In this form the hornbook is also a feature of the school scenes illustrating the lives of saints and heroes (see § 4.3).

ABC-book

An alphabet book, called 'abécédaire' (by its French name) or ABC-book, is – as its English name 'primer' indicates – the first book used by a child learning to read. In essence, the hornbook is a manageable version of the first page of an ABC-book. Handwritten alphabets, whether or not part of a manuscript, have existed throughout the Later Middle Ages, and can be nicely decorated (see ill. 259).⁵ They are usually preceded by a cross, indicating that the sign of a cross should be made before the alphabet and the succeeding prayers are read. Then a capital A is followed by all characters of the alphabet in lower case. The prayers that come next, usually the *Pater Noster* (the Lord's Prayer) first, then the *Ave Maria* (Hail Mary) and then others, were the texts best known and used most in the Middle Ages. They were not

ill. 21. Printed alpha
and prayers, Neth-
lands, c.1470. Haarl
Municipal Libr
II, 58. © SB Haarl



⁴ See for instance: Orme 2006: 54

⁵ Also: The Hague, Museum
Meermanno-Westreenianum,
10 D 34, f 1r (French, c.1480), s
Rudy 2006: 62.

only the first texts a child should know, but so well known that they could be used for teaching a child to read. A primer (now in New York) from as early as c.1400 contains these prayers in English instead of in Latin.⁶

There are sheets of ABC's among the very first printed texts. They may have been meant to be on a hornbook, or they may have been used like the manuscript primers. An alphabet printed in Haarlem around 1470 is one of the earliest printed ABC's known (ill. 21) and is indeed contemporary to many in manuscript. Moreover, some alphabets have been preserved inscribed on slates. A slate from the Dominican monastery in Maastricht dated to the beginning of the fifteenth century (see ill. 31) contains a clearly legible alphabet and the *Ave Maria*,⁷ while one from Lopikerkapel near Utrecht contains only the first six characters.⁸ In both cases it is unclear whether the slate was meant as an original, for teaching or copying or whether it was merely an exercise that has come down to us.

2.2 Reading

Book

Schoolbooks are worth a separate investigation, not only for their contents, but for the way they were used as well. It is often taken for granted that pupils did not own any books, but this presumption is belied by the sources: fragments of books have been excavated from school sites, pupils are depicted with books all the time, and accounts from households and charitable institutions show that books were bought for pupils both of high and low birth. Here, it suffices to describe how textbooks were preserved, used, and depicted.

Many schoolbooks, both handwritten and printed, have survived above ground, as part of libraries or as individual objects. Sometimes they are still in the educational institute they were made for, but most of them made long and complex journeys through the centuries and across the world. A nice collection



ill. 22. Wooden book board with leather cover and metal cleats. Bois-le-Duc, Municipal Archaeology Service, inv.no. i 11858. © Author.

6 New York, Columbia University, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Plimpton ms 258, f 1r, see: Orme 2006: 62 (ill. 17).

7 Arts 2005; the slate was part of the exhibition 'Dominicanenklooster - acht eeuwen A-locatie' in the Centre Céramique in Maastricht in the first half of 2007; thanks to Ronald van Genabeek for pointing this find out to me.

8 Ooyevaar 1987: 165.

of English schoolbooks is in the Exeter College Library, and many printed school texts survive in the Athenaeum Library in Deventer and in the *Librije* of Zutphen – a good survey of Dutch schoolbooks from the sixteenth century was published by Bekkering et al.⁹

Fragments of books are common archaeological finds at school sites, but also at the sites of monastic buildings and ‘normal’ households (ill. 22). Some large groups of book mounts have been recovered, for instance from the castle in the city of Eindhoven,¹⁰ from a monastic site at Heemstede,¹¹ and outside the Netherlands from the church at Hannoversch Munden,¹² the sacristy of the village church in Schwinkendorf,¹³ and the monastery at Aebelholt (Denmark),¹⁴ demonstrating that books were present in larger numbers in all kinds of households. The archaeology of the book adds significantly to our knowledge of the use, reuse, misuse and disposal of books. Where the books kept in collections are the ones that were, for whatever reason, handled with care, the fragments of book bindings, boards, mounts, clasps and pages are evidence of many other books that ended up as waste. Sometimes an explanation is at hand, for instance, when a large group of books was discarded at once in times of religious turmoil, like the extraordinary find of nine books in the c.1600 cesspit of a captain in Breda¹⁵ and that of seven sixteenth-century books in a cesspit in Tiel.¹⁶ But usually the fragments just point to books that were handled too often, too roughly, or just went out of fashion. This must have been the fate of schoolbooks even more than of other kinds of texts – pupils are still notorious for their ability to wear out books, and the curriculum changed from time to time then just like nowadays. Therefore, that fragments of books have been found in the cesspits of the sixteenth-century schools of Groningen and Gorinchem is not surprising.

Lectern

To facilitate the reading of books, they could be placed on a lectern. These come in various shapes and sizes and a few have been preserved in museum collections¹⁷ or monastic environments. All of them must have been used for study purposes, although as far as I know none of them can be positively linked to a teacher. On the other hand, there is almost no depiction of a teacher, wise man or author in a medieval manuscript that does not show a lectern, so it is still possible to denote the key features and types.

The same types of lecterns were used for reading and writing, activities that indeed took place side by side. The simplest lectern is a wooden board that is placed horizontally or sloping. It can be supported by a stand, or by placing two sloping boards against one another. A rim on the bottom prevents the book from sliding off. Most shown are double lecterns, usually provided with a compartment for more books placed between the two sloping sides. They are placed either on a table or on a high stand with a foot. In many cases the top part can be turned around. In that way, the book one is reading can be placed in the light without moving the whole lectern around, or more books can be used at the same time. Some lecterns even have three or four sides, that can all hold books, and often the foot of the lectern has room to put books away in a hollow compartment with a lockable door.

The lectern could be fastened to a chair, usually to the left-hand armrest. Miniatures show that side-lecterns like this could be pushed away or hauled in when necessary, because they were placed on a revolving stand. In this way, someone could turn his chair into a fully-equipped study.

9 Bekkering et al 1990: 41-103.

10 Arts 1992: 177-178, see also: Krüger 2002: 211-214.

11 Diependale and Ter Schegget 2006: 36.

12 Krüger 2002: 195-198

13 Krüger 2002: Karte 19.

14 Krüger 2002: 215-217.

15 Bookbindings with mounts from the house at Catharinastraat 91-93 that belonged to Charles de Heraugière, captain of the ‘turfship’, excavated in 1999 and in the course of being studied by Guido van den Eijnde; I thank Ria Berkvens for this information.

16 Sarfatij 1990: 172.

17 For instance in the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum in München, inv. nos. MA 4089 and 30/830, and in the Bargello Museum in Florence.

2.3 Writing

Writing tablet

Although it can look roughly the same as a hornbook in some depictions, the writing tablet or wax tablet is essentially different from the hornbook, because the latter is for reading and the tablet is for writing. It consists of a rectangular, usually wooden tablet, with a deepened part (inside a rim) holding a thin layer of wax, often blackened. A stylus is used to write into the wax and to wipe out the text again. The tablet can be hollowed out on one or on both sides and is sometimes decorated on the outside, while a set of tablets can be held together in a case, sometimes with additional room for a stylus, and can be suspended from the belt by straps. The tablet is called ‘tabula’ (table) in Latin, and its equivalent in most vernaculars (‘tafel’ in Dutch). A diptych of wax tablets, with black wax inside brown (wooden) rims is clearly labelled ‘tabula’ in the depiction of a personified *Rhetorica* in the *Hortus Deliciarum* compiled by Herrad of Hohenburg between 1176-1196, and to stress its use she holds a writing peg labelled ‘stilus’ as well (ill. 23). *Grammatica* holds a book and a rod (‘scope’) in this manuscript.¹⁸

An inventory of wax tablets excavated or preserved in North-Western Europe from the medieval (and early modern) period was recently compiled by Élisabeth Lalou.¹⁹ It shows clearly the many instances of these objects holding notes, like ‘medieval palmtops’ – the modern ones come with a stylus too. In an overview, these uses are summarized as follows: ‘Tablets were employed as learning aids, notebooks, model books, *objets d’art* and love tokens; for quasi-liturgical purposes; as vehicles for the drafting of literacy and other texts; for keeping up both temporary and formal administrative records, especially financial transactions (including everything from royal and civic accounts to rentals and gaming tallies), and for compiling lists such as library inventories’.²⁰

In fact, of the 127 medieval (sets of) tablets mentioned in the inventory of Lalou, only three finds are registered as containing school notes, but these three include the 22 codices of in total 54 tablets of the pupils of the Lübeck Grammar School in the fourteenth century (see § 3.5), counted as one find. The other tablets with schoolwork are from Cologne and Essen in Germany, both dating to the fifteenth century.²¹ And although some of the others contain semi-official city accounts or monastery inventories, many contain collections of various notes, drawings, additions and accounts, of which many may have been schooling or learning exercises as well. The substantial group of wax tablets from a school in Lübeck is comparable to large groups known from monasteries, such as those found under the nuns’ choir at Wienhausen (24 tablets)²² and in the sewer of the Augustinereremitenkloster at Freiburg (twelve tablets).²³

In the inventory made by Lalou, no finds from the Low Countries are listed apart from one fancy ivory set of eight tablets with two covers in a leather case together with an iron stylus, from the cathedral treasury of Saint-Aubain in Namur.²⁴ From the Northern Netherlands, at least 24 finds of (sets of) wax tablets are known, containing at least 73 individual tablets in total.²⁵ Of these, at least the one set of nine tablets belonged to a pupil: it contained Latin texts and sums and was found in the cesspit of the Groningen Grammar School (see § 3.1). One of the others is strongly associated with schooling too: a wax tablet (20 cms high) that was found in the fifteenth-century grave of an eight-year-old girl in Dordrecht, together with a ‘plak’ and the twigs of a rod.²⁶ This is a puzzling find: in these

18 Green 1979: vol. I: 56-57, vol. II: 104-106; the original was destroyed in 1870; but there is a number of later drawings after the work.

19 Lalou 1992: 248-280.

20 Brown 1994.

21 Lalou 1992: 253 and 256.

22 Appuhn 1973, see also: Krüger 2002: 180-183

23 Müller 1996: 163-166, 284-285 and Taf. 31.

24 Namur, Musée d’art ancien de pays namurois, inv.no. 29, see: Lalou 1992: 266.

25 See the list in Carmiggelt 2004: 14, combined with Krüger 2002: 183.

26 Sarfatij 1984.



ill. 23. Artes liberales in the Hortus Deliciarum, end twelfth century.
Photo taken from: Green 1979: pl. 18.



ill. 24. Set of wax tablets, decorated with a love castle, ivory, Paris, c.1465-1500, from the Cathedral of St. Lambert in Liège. Paris, Louvre Museum, inv.no. MRR 429. © Author.

times it was unusual to supply grave-goods, although the dead sometimes wore jewellery or held a rosary, and books (presumably bibles) were placed in graves incidentally.²⁷ All three objects from the girl's grave are linked to school, but why were they accompanying the girl in her grave? The wax tablet might have been put there as a positive sign, to stress her ability to write,²⁸ it also may have contained some kind of text. The symbols of schoolmaster's punishing are even harder to understand. Was this some kind of punishment? Or did the girl maybe die at school – from beatings? From the Southern Netherlands, the beautiful set of writing tablets that survived in the cathedral of St. Lambert in Liège (taken to France after the demolition of the church, now in the Louvre²⁹) is of special interest, because it is a contemporary both in location and in time of the styluses found during the excavations of the former cathedral complex at the Place Saint-Lambert (see § 3.5). The codex was produced in Paris and decorated with a love castle; the three tablets are between a front and back cover, of which the insides have been written on as well (ill. 24).

A specific type of wooden writing tablet, with a handle, was excavated from the churchyard of the Cathedral of St. John in Bois-le-Duc and most likely dates from the fourteenth-century (see ill. 83).³⁰ This is one of the largest writing tablets preserved and is probably linked to the choir school of the church. This type of tablet, with a handle, is also the one shown in school scenes most often (see Chapter 4). A similar specimen is known from France, excavated in Bailleul-en-France (Somme), dated to the fourteenth century.³¹

The wood type of many wooden wax tablets has been tested. From her inventory, Krüger concluded that the most commonly used type was beechwood – adding that the German word 'Buch' for book was derived from the 'Buchenholz' for beechwood, used especially for codexes of several tablets that formed books – although writing tablets from deal, maple, limewood, boxwood, oak, cypress, chestnut, poplar, apple/pear and fir are also known.³² In the Netherlands as well,

²⁷ Krüger 2002: 142.

²⁸ Parallels for this are known from a different period: the graves of Roman girls sometimes contain writing tablets to stress their literacy. For instance, the ivory wax tablet and two bronze inkwells in a rich girl's grave inventory: Berlin, Staatliche Museen – Antikensammlung, inv. no. 30891, see: Vierendeel 1978: 193 and Willemsen 2003: 170; two more 'writing sets' from girls' graves are mentioned in Martin-Kilcher 2000.

²⁹ Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv.no. MRR 429.

³⁰ Bois-le-Duc, Dienst Bouwhistorie en Archeologie, inv.no. i 5592 (DBKJ VII-34-1530), published in: Boekwilt and Janssen 1997: 104.

³¹ Alexandre-Bidon 2000: 18.

³² Krüger 2002: 73; the only Dutch find of which the wood was identified in her list is the beechwood codex from Delft in the National Archives in The Hague (p. 183).



ill. 25. Various styluses excavated in Dordrecht and Leiden. Alphen, Provinciaal Depot van Bodemvondsten Zuid-Holland. © Author.



ill. 26. Bone stylus with bronze cuff and metal styluses, excavated from the cathedral school in Liège. Liège, Archaeological Service of Wallony. © Author.

writing ta
was also u
shows no
of the large range of wood available.

Stylus

Most numerous among the finds of writing material are writing pegs or styluses (*stili* in Latin). They are usually between 5 and 12 cms long, have a sharp point on one end and a flat base at the other end (ill. 25). On the body of the stylus there are (groups of) horizontal ribs called ‘cuffs’, usually in one spot but sometimes in more. These have two purposes, for gripping and to keep the wax scraped with the broad end from flowing down the stylus onto the writing hand. For this latter purpose, the broad end of styluses is usually hollow on one side – seen as the ‘underside’ – with a cuff directly underneath. For the first purpose, other provisions were sometimes made, as we can see on a bone stylus from the site of the Liège cathedral school at St. Lambert’s square (see § 3.5), where a bronze cuff was fastened over the bone body at a place suited for

- 33 Baart et al 1977: 378 and literature mentioned there.
34 For instance: Groningen, Singelstraat, 369, codex of tablets from school (*Buxus*), Amsterdam, Archaeological Service, DIEM-210-7 (*Frangula*), Bois-le-Duc, Archaeological Service, i 5592 (*Quercus*).
35 Liège, Place St. Lambert, find.no. L 5522, found in 1991; the finds of St. Lambert’s square are still at the Service Archéologique de Liège of the Ministère de la Région Wallonne in Liège, largely unedited and unpublished; I would like to thank Nancy Verstraelen for her assistance there.

ill. 27. Bone stylus with character. Stockholm, National Historical Museum, inv.no. 20106: KA f II. © Author.



Styluses were made from iron, bronze, copper, brass, bone, ivory and sometimes wood. Iron and bronze specimens are solid and forged in a single piece, while the copper and brass ones are usually made of a sheet of the metal rolled up tightly, with a separate small piece over the broadest end as a base. Although solid pegs continued to be used, from the fifteenth century onwards the hollow brass ones are most common as archaeological finds. Bone or ivory styluses are the more luxurious of the writing pegs; they were cut from a single piece and the head is often decorated, transforming it into a hand, the head of an animal³⁶ or a human being. Bone styluses were personalized in other ways as well: a specimen from the Alvastra monastery in Sweden is inscribed with a character [Y?] on the side of the head (ill. 27).³⁷ Many of the most lavishly decorated styluses were, like decorated writing tablets and diptychs, preserved above ground; most bone styluses from excavations are simple ones.

Excavated styluses are often in the context of more finds indicating writing and reading, notably in monastic and public buildings. But they are also present wherever large-scale metal detecting was done, for instance in the collections with small metal finds from the drowned villages in Zeeland (much of which is in the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam), from the trace of the metro in Amsterdam and that of the railway tunnel in Rotterdam, from the Statenplein in Dordrecht and the market square in Bois-le-Duc. Abroad there are, for instance, styluses from Bruges, Damme and Ypres in Belgium, from the Seine (now in the Musée du Moyen Age in Paris³⁸) and the Thames foreshore (now in the Museum of London). There is no find pattern; these collections and find circumstances indicate that styluses were commonly lost almost everywhere. A puzzling large assemblage of styluses is known from Gorinchem, where 65 were recovered from a deposition layer belonging to a women's hospital, that could be dated before 1500,³⁹ and a less puzzling assemblage from Lübeck, where the 44 writing pegs from bone, iron and brass discovered together in a fifteenth-century sewer⁴⁰ can be connected to the presence of the municipal business school on the site (see § 3.5).

Styluses have often been depicted, mostly in miniatures and marginal decorations in manuscripts, whenever someone is writing on a writing tablet. In a Northern Netherlandish Book of Hours by the mid-fifteenth-century artist who made the famous Hours of Catherine of Cleves,⁴¹ there are three marginal scenes of men and monkeys writing. On folio 34v (ill. 28) a person with a headscarf and a leather (black) bookcase on his belt is depicted seated, writing on a large wooden (pale brown) tablet with a handle covered in blackened wax (dark green/black). He is using a metal (silvery-coloured) stylus with two cuffs that he is holding in his right hand; the characters are in white and written from left to right.

On folio 157v of this manuscript we find a variation on that image: here it is a monkey that is writing with a brass (gold-coloured) stylus into the black wax on a wooden (brown) tablet with a handle; no writing can be deciphered, but the stylus is depicted in detail, with its point in the wax and the head in the monkey's paw. The animal is kneeling on its left knee with the tablet resting on its right knee; it is holding the tablet with its left front paw and writing with its right. This scene is parodying a man writing; the monkey is wearing a jester's hood. Another monkey – and another parody – can be found in the margin of folio 126v of the same book (ill. 29). This ape is sitting with legs crossed and a large wooden tablet held on its

36 Stockholm, Statens Historiska Museet, find.no. KS 3678 from Kalmar (Smaland) is a stylus in (walrus) ivory ending in a dragon's head holding a round object between its jaws.

37 Stockholm, Statens Historiska Museet, find.no. 20106:KA f II.

38 Forgeais 1875.

39 Gorinchem, Archaeological working party, thanks to Martin Veen from bringing this group to my attention.

40 Krüger 2002: 151.

41 The Hague, Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum, ms 10 F 50, see: *Golden Age* 1990: 163.



ill. 28. Man writing with stylus on wax tablet, *Book of Hours, Utrecht, c.1460.*

The Hague, Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum, 10 F 50, f 34v. © MMW.

ill. 29. Monkey writing with stylus on wax tablet, *Book of Hours, Utrecht, c.1460. The Hague, Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum, 10 F 50, f 126v. © MMW.*



knee, rows of dashes (a tally?) scratched into the wax. It is holding a brass writing peg in its left front paw, with the sharp end towards the paw and a broader end on the tablet – the ape holds the stylus upside down, and in the wrong hand. Maybe that is why it is laughing.

As part of the standard equipment of anyone writing, the stylus could be used by a writer for other purposes when necessary, as is evidenced by a charming image of Church Father St. Jerome – often depicted in a study full of writing equipment, but here in exile in the desert – who is assisting a lion that came to him with a thorn in its paw (ill. 30). He is depicted in the act of removing the thorn using his metal stylus, which with its sharp point must have seemed well suited for this job. The image is on the backside of the left shutter of the Sforza-triptych attributed to (the workshop) of Rogier van der Weijden, painted in grey tones, and the writing peg used in an alternative way is painted in great detail.⁴²

Slate

Slates with inscriptions are a common find in late medieval towns, with endless variations in what is written or drawn on them (ill. 31). Tosca van de Walle-van der Woude, who published an overview of inscribed slates found in the Netherlands,⁴³ makes a useful division into four groups: writing slates (comparable with our notebooks), slates of which the inscribed representation has a specific function (gaming boards, sundials), slates with purely creative representations (drawings, patterns), and roof slates with inscriptions (mostly countings).

⁴² Brussels, Koninklijke Musea van Schone Kunsten, Oude Kunst, inv.no. 2407, see: *Koninklijke Musea* 1984: 326.

⁴³ Van de Walle-van der Woude 2001.



ill. 30. *St. Jerome removing a thorn from the lion's paw using his stylus. (Workshop of) Rogier van der Weyden, Sforza Tryptich, fifteenth century. Brussels, Royal Museums of Art, inv.no. 2407. © KIK Brussels, no. b118817.*

ill. 31. *Slate with alphabet and prayers, excavated in the Dominican monastery of Maastricht. Maastricht, Provinciaal Depot van Bodenvondsten Limburg. © BAAC.*

ill. 32. *Slate pencil found in Diemen, fifteenth century. Amsterdam, Archaeology Service, inv.no. DIEM-2-10. © Wiard Krook.*

Archivist Christopher Whitrick, who studied inscribed slates from the United Kingdom, proposes a division into four functional groups, that specify more precisely the nature of the categories presented by Van de Walle-van der Woude: 'slate as a medium for permanent preservation; slate as a temporary means of preserving information which might later need to be recorded on a more conventional medium; writing on slate for didactic purposes; and slate as a surface for design-trials and simple doodles'.⁴⁴ Of course, it is possible that functions are combined on a single slate.

In the category of slates used for writing, but also for drawing, it is striking that most of the scratches are shallow and almost illegible. Moreover, many of

⁴⁴ From an unpublished paper by Whitrick on 'Writing on Slates' given at a Finds Research Group meeting in London in 1992; with thanks to John Malden for the copy provided.

these slates show a slanting rim on all sides that lacks inscriptions, and almost all have been used in more than one direction and on both sides. R.J. Ooyevaar in his presentation of 41 inscribed slates from the Hofstede te Vliet in Lopikerkapel (near Utrecht in the Netherlands)⁴⁵ concludes rightly, to my opinion, that these slates were embedded in a wooden rim and covered in wax, and thus used as wax tablets. The superficial scratches in these slates, caused by the sharp points of styluses through the wax layer, are the same as those in the surface of wooden writing tablets. As many of the wax tablets depicted just show a black surface in a brown (wooden) rim, it is possible that in some cases writing slates were meant.

Slate pencil

When slates were covered in wax, ‘normal’ metal writing pegs could be used to write on them. It is also possible to write directly onto the slate surface by using a slate pencil: a rod made of soapstone or squeezed clay that leaves a dark inscription on the slate, and can be wiped off again. Two pointed fragments of slate pencils were excavated in Zwolle from inside the boarding house *Domus Parva* from the period 1375-1450 (see § 3.4). From the same context, slates with inscriptions were recovered, and the combination of the two occurs in the waste of the Latin school of Gorinchem, from two centuries later, as well. A slate pencil from the fifteenth century was recovered from the mount of Diemen near Amsterdam, where a wooden writing tablet was found too; the pencil is now 5.5 cms long and has a diameter of 0.5 cms (ill. 32).⁴⁶ The over 50 other slate pencils found in Amsterdam, many of uncertain date, show that complete specimens measure roughly from 10 to 15 cms, with a maximum diameter of 0.9 cms.⁴⁷

Parchment & paper

Parchment and paper are rare finds in archaeology, but bits and pieces were recovered from many of the school sites mentioned in Chapter 3. More often, pieces like this are ‘excavated’ as reused material in other books that are still intact – both cuts of parchment and sheets of paper were used in the binding of books. Some of them are pieces of books that got lost; others were once used as loose sheets. Just a handful have recognizable school notes on them and must have been used as notebooks.

Larger groups of parchment and/or paper fragments have been preserved notably in so-called ‘dry archaeological contexts’, layers between roofs, walls or floors filled with mostly organic material,⁴⁸ like in the Whitefriars Abbey of Canterbury, under the nun’s choir at Wienhausen (48 pieces),⁴⁹ under the roof at Kempten⁵⁰ and in the pendentives of the convent at Alptribach, where the assemblage held letters and drawings from the pupils of the evangetic school established there in the 1560s (see § 3.7).

Quill

The quill or feather pen is the most common writing device when using ink on parchment or on paper. It is made from a firm feather (from a goose), simply cutting a tip in the quill (the shaft), from which the pen takes its name. Sometimes all of the feather’s beard is removed, sometimes part of it is left on the quill. The tip needed repair once in a while, when it became too soft, polluted, or torn; then a new tip was cut with a penknife, a bit further on – in the end, the quill became too short and a new feather was taken. To check on the tip, it was held up in the light; writers are depicted either cutting a tip or checking one against the light (ill. 33).

45 Ooyevaar 1987: 168-169.

46 Amsterdam, Archaeology Service, inv.nos. DIEM-2-10 (slate pencil) and DIEM-210-7 (tablet).

47 See also: Baart et al 1977: 380.

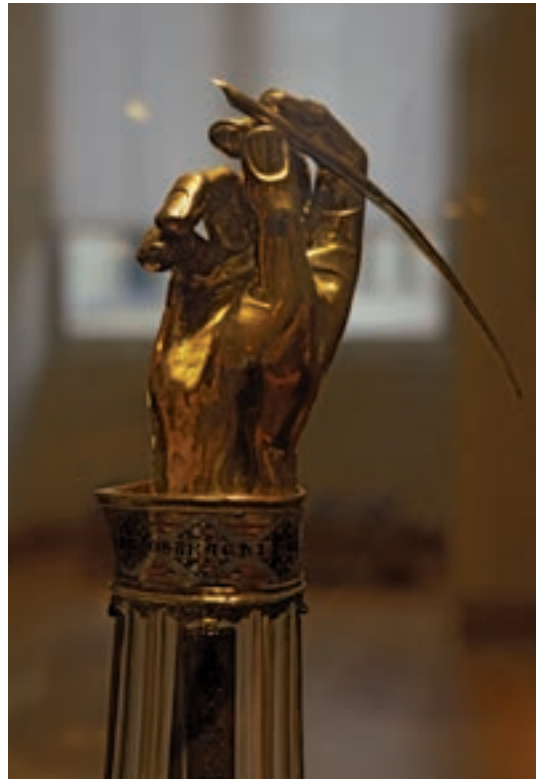
48 Ericsson and Atzbach 2005.

49 Appuhn 1973, see also: Krüger 2002: 223-227.

50 Ericsson and Atzbach 2005: 58-114.



ill. 33. Author checking his quill against the light. Woodcut in Malermi Bible of 1490, Venice, Photo taken from: Thornton 1997: 77.



ill. 34. Late-medieval quill found in Cologne. Cologne, Municipal Museum, inv. no. 1986/607.

© Stadtmuseum/
Zeughaus.

ill. 35. Arm reliquary of St. Luke holding a quill, gilded and enamelled silver, Naples, 1336-1338. Paris, Louvre Museum, inv.no. OA 10944.

© Author.

In contrast to the literally thousands of depictions of quills – think only of all the miniatures showing evangelists or church fathers writing – they have seldom been discovered among archaeological finds: six were recovered from a frozen site⁵¹ and there is one in the city museum of Cologne (ill. 34).⁵² Feathers themselves are understandably perishable, but it is remarkable that the quills do not seem strong

⁵¹ Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum: NM 7754-1/2, 9472-4 and NG 1077 (6.2 to 12 cm long, diameter 0.7 to 0.9 cm), from the site of the 'Behouden Huys' at Nova Zembla left in 1596, see below at 'inkwell', see: Braat et al 1998: 308.

⁵² Cologne, Stadtmuseum/Zeughaus inv.no. 1986/607, see: Krüger 2002: 132 and Tafel 48,4; she also lists two wooden imitations of quills from Wienhausen (231 and Tafel 47,1 and 2).



ill. 36. *Dominican friar Pietro di Palude with penknife, inkwell, scissors and letter. Fresco, Tomaso da Modena, 1352. Treviso, Church of St. Nicholas, chapter house. © Author.*

enough to survive even particularly favourable circumstances. Of course, they were used to the nub, and the off-cuttings are not easy to identify. There are very detailed and true-to-life depictions of hands holding quills as ‘speaking’ parts of arm-shaped reliquaries holding a relic of the arm of one of the saint-authors, as on top of the gilded arm-reliquary of St. Luke made in Naples c.1336-1338 (ill. 35)⁵³; this quill is about life sized and the hand clearly shows the position in which it was held.

Penknife

Knives are a common find in archaeology, but they could be used for all kinds of tasks and were indeed multipurpose items pre-eminently.⁵⁴ For cutting pen-tips any sharp knife will do and therefore it is hard to recognize a penknife out of context. Luckily, knives have often been found in the context of other objects for writing. Many of the knives found in the cesspit of the Groningen Grammar school (see ill. 68) would be well suited as penknives, and some of the knives from the Lübeck business school (see § 3.5) still had traces of ink on the blades when they were found.⁵⁵

As writers are depicted so often, and the moment when a writer was sharpening his pen seems to have caught the imagination of many an artist, there are innumerable depictions of penknives in medieval and Renaissance art. Sometimes, in manuscripts, a knife can be no more than a stroke of silvery ink (for the blade) combined with a stroke of brown (for the handle). In monumental art they could receive more attention, and penknives are prominent in many of the portraits of Dominicans painted by Tomaso da Modena in the *capitolo* (chapter-house) of the Dominican convent of the San Nicolò (church of St. Nicholas) in Treviso in 1352.

⁵³ Paris, Musée du Louvre, OA 10944 (from the treasury of Medina del Campo).

⁵⁴ Krüger 2002: 135 states that knives are ‘Mehrzweckinstrumente’ too.

⁵⁵ Krüger 2002: 233.



ill. 37. *Inkwell with penknife of Federico da Montefeltro. Intarsia in study of Federico, Urbino, Ducal Palace, 1476. Photo taken from postcard.*

ill. 38. *Ink pen excavated at the Rokin in Amsterdam, brass, fourteenth century. Amsterdam, Archaeology Service, inv.no. ROK1-231. © Wiard Krook.*



In this programme, all Dominicans are either studying or writing, and the frescoes are rightly famous for the many objects of literacy shown in detail, including many pens, inkwells, penknives (ill. 36), sheets and books, and also what are presumably the oldest known depictions of a pair of glasses, a magnifying glass (both for reading) and a pair of intersecting scissors (used for opening a letter, see ill. 36).⁵⁶

In the famous *studiolo* of Federico da Montefeltro in the Ducal Palace of Urbino, the wood *intarsia* panels show all the objects associated with study, including books and implements for writing. In one of the *trompe l'oeil* closets, between books, a writing tablet and a measuring ring, a large inkwell can be seen, with part of the owner's name on the top: FEDE[RICO] (ill. 37). In this inkwell stands a quill (beard removed) while a penknife is resting in one of the compartments. The knife is a simple one, with a black handle and a narrow, pointed blade. In many depictions like this, it is clear from the context that the knife is used as a penknife, but apart from being straight and small, it has no clear distinctions.

Ink pen

Although people writing in medieval art are almost exclusively shown with a quill and penknife, ink pens were already in use from about 1400 onwards as well. A specimen found in a monastery at Delft, now in a private collection,⁵⁷ can be dated from the archaeological context to the fourteenth/fifteenth century, a date that is also most likely for a pen from Amsterdam (ill. 38). Both are made from a thin sheet of copper that was rolled up; the double point is cut out. Both measure just over 8 cms in length, with a maximum width of 0.5 cms. The space between the two teeth of the tip of the Amsterdam find is less than 0.1 cms. A gold-coloured pen like this is depicted dipped

⁵⁶ Gibbs 1989: 83-86.

⁵⁷ Collection of M. Hofman, shown to me by him in October 2001; there are two copper styluses from the same context (Phoenixstraat, associated with the house of the Brethren of Common Life).



ill. 39. *Inkwell in Sala della Ragione in Padova. Photo taken from: Tenenti et al 1992: vol. 2, Tav. 122.*

ill. 40. *Bone inkwell and inkhorn, excavated in Bois-le-Duc. Bois-le-Duc, Archaeology Service, inv. nos. i 8826 and i 14983. © Author.*

into an inkwell by the evangelist Matthew in a fifteenth-century Flemish book of hours.⁵⁸ These ink pens were used with an inkwell, dipped into the ink again and again – like a crown pen used nowadays in arts and crafts or calligraphy.

Inkwell

For keeping ink, any container impermeable to liquid with an opening large enough for a pen-tip will do. As a matter of fact, a whole range of small containers in ceramic and metal have been identified as possible inkwells; they could have held ointments, holy water or drinking water for birds as well. In depictions (ill. 39), two types of inkwells, both portable, are seen most frequently: inkhorns and leather inkwells on a round base. Excavated inkwells show a larger diversity, including square pewter inkwells and a range of shapes in various types of earthenware and glass. Although used by anyone writing and thus not exclusive to schooling, the various inkwells recovered from school sites show that all types were used in education as well.

For inkhorns, the reasonably straight ends of cattle horns were used (ill. 40). The horns have usually been sawn off at a length of 8 to 10 cms, so they could easily be held; this produced an opening of 3 to 4 cms wide.⁵⁹ They were excavated in the Netherlands, for instance, from the Groningen school (see § 3.1), and in the rest of Europe as well.⁶⁰ The horns cannot stand on their own. Depictions show how they were used: they can be held in one hand whilst dipping the pen in the ink with the other, and when not in use they were put either in a hole in the desk or stuck behind a cord or strip. Inkhorns were the cheapest containers for ink possible, but they cannot really be carried safely, and even when in use at the desk, they must often have fallen over.

Most inkwells meant to be carried are circular ones made in leather or horn that were worn on straps, usually as part of a double writing case (see below). Their dimensions vary, with height and width in the range of 3 to 6 cms, while the smallest opening for a pen found is about 1.5 cms wide. The matching stopper usually fits partly into this opening. The inkwells are carried by a double strap that goes through small holes in the rim of both stopper and inkwell. One of the best preserved examples is from the Groningen Grammar school, dated to the first half of the sixteenth century, and its details show how it was carried (see ills. 65 & 66).

This circular horn inkwell, 4.1 cms high and 3.5 cms wide, is closed by both a horn stopper and a metal lid that goes over it. Small holes (diameter 0.3 cms) are in the sides of the rim, in the surface of the metal lid and in the sides of the stopper. The straps were tied under the rim and went upwards through the lid and the stopper, emerging from the hole in the top of the stopper. The upward strain of the straps, the wear of which can clearly be seen, would keep the lid down

⁵⁸ Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat.Lat. 14935, f 18v.

⁵⁹ For this, I took the average of four Dutch specimen, from Bois-le-Duc (inv.no. i 14983), Amsterdam (LAUS-8) and two from the Groningen Grammar school (369). See also: Prummel 2000.

⁶⁰ Toronto, Royal Ontario Museum, inv. nos. 926.29.4 and 5 (two inkhorns from England, sixteenth century).



ill. 41. Various inkwells excavated from London. Museum of London.

© Author.



ill. 42. Silver writing stand decorated with putti writing. Munich, Museum of the Residence, inv.no. Sch.137.

© Author.

and push the stopper deeper into the opening; the inkwell would close itself off when carried. This inkwell is marked on the front, probably to identify the owner, and still preserves a crumpled-up woollen rag inside that would absorb the ink, keeping it in place.⁶¹

A large number of this type of portable leather inkwells (called *calamaius* in Latin) have been found in the city of London⁶² (ill. 41); a depiction of someone producing them from 1565 indicates that they were a specialization of leather workers (see ill. 63). Other types were carried as well; that pewter specimens were taken on long journeys is proved by the inkwell recovered with some quills and a number of books from the site of the 'Behouden Huis' at Nova Zembla,⁶³ where Willem Barents and his crew spent the harsh winter of 1596 after their ship got stuck in the pack ice – a very famous episode of Dutch exploration history. The inkwell was left behind at Nova Zembla – they must have run out of ink anyway.

All the inkwells dealt with thus far are small, simple ones; those are the ones encountered most often in archaeology. As writing was done in all layers of society, very elaborate objects for writing, destined to be placed at a desk or carried on journeys, have been preserved as well. They usually consist of an inkwell combined with holes for the placement of quills, many times provided with a space for sand or a sand disperser. Sometimes room for keeping paper, seals, wax and letters was

⁶¹ Groningen, Stichting Monument en Materiaal, inv.no. 369/2, see: Prummel 2000: 82.

⁶² London, Museum of London, for instance inv.nos. 4892, 4882, 26203 and 4898.

⁶³ Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv.no. NM 7753 (inkwell) and NM 9476 (lid), see: Braat et al 1998: 307-308; quills on p. 308, books on p. 301-305.



ill. 43. *Sand disperser, depicted on fresco with St. Jerome in his study, Florence, Ognissanti. Domenico Ghirlandaio, dated 1480. © Author.*

added, making the object into a portable writing set. A very luxurious specimen made in Nuremberg around 1580 (ill. 42) has drawers of various sizes underneath an ink stand that is closed off with a lid. The writing box is gilded and lavishly decorated, while the tiny silver sculptures have been chosen appropriately: the lady on the lid is teaching a child from a board, while the four winged *putti* on the corners represent the arts. One is writing the ABC and represents Grammar, one is writing numerals and represents Arithmetic. It is not known to whom this beautiful writing set belonged.⁶⁴ If such an object were owned by a famous person, the chances of it surviving above ground are better. Therefore, the table desk of Henry VIII, made c.1525 of very vulnerable materials like wood and gilded leather, is still intact.⁶⁵

Some of the nicest are rectangular inkstands in majolica from sixteenth-century Northern Italy, like a very handsome piece in blue majolica with a berettino glaze now in the International Museum of Ceramics in Faenza (Italy) from the first half of the sixteenth century. Its decoration includes a quill and a penknife combined with 'AVE MARIA' on a banderole and the female name 'GVRINA' around the circular opening.⁶⁶ The name and the decoration (incorporating a heart and tulips) indicate that it may have been designed for a lady as a love gift, although it may also have been destined for the man who hoped to be writing letters to Gurina. That elaborate inkstands made good relationship gifts is also shown by a heart-shaped German stoneware set.⁶⁷ Two comparable inkstands from the Patanazzi workshop in Urbino show on the inside, on the bottom of the compartments, depictions of the objects that should be put there.⁶⁸ A rectangular inkstand with an inkwell and two compartments, presumably one for pens and one for a penknife, is depicted

64 Munich, Schatzkammer of the Residenz, inv.no. Sch.137, see: Thoma 1955: 26.

65 London, Victoria & Albert Museum, inv.no. W. 29-1932.

66 Faenza, Museo Internazionale delle Ceramiche, inv.no. 16730.

67 Sèvres, Musée National de Céramique, inv.no. MNC 15642.

68 London, The Wallace Collection, inv.no. C112, dated c.1580-1590, see: Norman 1976: 229-231.



f a table filled with writing implements framing a writing St. Mark; the inkstand is coloured in a dark grey indicating it was made of pewter. The same table holds a black portable writing case as well.⁶⁹

Sand disperser

Ink dries slowly, even more so when it is applied thickly. Therefore, when a document had been written in ink, sand was sprinkled over it, absorbing the superfluous ink. When all had dried, the sand was blown or brushed off, and could be collected and used again. Sand is not necessary for writing, but does make the production of a neatly written text much easier. It could be used from any container, but one with holes in the lid simplifies the sprinkling, and for that a sand disperser (or 'sander') with a perforated lid is part of most writing sets. As an element of the standard equipment of a writer it is often present in descriptions (see § 7.3) and depictions (ill. 43).

The shape of these sand containers varies (circular, square, even triangular) but they can easily be recognized by the lid with holes, that can come off for refilling, like the brass sand disperser found in Zwolle (ill. 44).⁷⁰ When part of a portable writing case, the sand disperser usually has a second, solid lid over the perforated one. A clever solution for a writing set that includes a sand disperser is a sixteenth-century circular case made of bone, found in Amsterdam.⁷¹ It consists of a case for pens and other tools, a sand disperser and an inkwell, all circular and equipped with screw-threads, and a screw-top lid. The three objects can be unscrewed and used as a writing set, and when screwed onto each other, the case is a handy object to take along.

Graphite holder

Graphite was discovered in England in about 1564. It was licensed for use in erasable writing, and had the layer found been its only supply, the licensees would make a fortune. By the turn of the century, however, graphite had been extracted all

ill. 44. Sand disperser, brass, fifteenth century. Zwolle, Provinciaal Overijssels Museum, inv. no. 6082. © POM.

ill. 45. Graphite holders, excavated in Amsterdam, end of sixteenth and seventeenth century. Amsterdam, Archaeology Service, various inv.nos. © Wiard Krook.

69 Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat.Lat. 10293, f 47r.

70 Zwolle, Provinciaal Overijssels Museum, inv.no. 6082.

71 Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, inv.no. F 8790.

over Europe and was used widely.⁷² The oldest graphite holders from archaeological contexts date from the last quarter of the sixteenth century. They belong to a first type of ‘pencil’ known to have stayed in use at least throughout the first half of the seventeenth century, as the finds from the inner city of Amsterdam show (ill. 45).

The graphite holder is a small elongated case of sheet metal (mostly brass, but pewter too) in which graphite can be stuffed. One end is closed, while the other end is provided with a (protruding) hollow tip. A slide in the case is used to push the graphite towards the writing tip. Graphite containers of this first generation usually have the character ‘S’ marked twice on one end, which may be an indication of the size. Their measurements show some standardization: the complete ones are 7.5, 10, or 11.5 cms long and between 0.6 and 0.9 cms in diameter. One found in Amsterdam⁷³ has a mark in the middle, which may either relate to the maker or the owner.

I have not found any depictions of graphite holders, for instance in prints. As the number of finds in Amsterdam alone shows,⁷⁴ this representational absence does not rule out their presence and use in reality. Of course, it was soon discovered how graphite could be melted into pegs, causing first graphite pegs and later on pencils to take the place of the graphite holder. The mechanical pencil still uses basically the system of the first graphite containers, but with a graphite peg instead of loose powder pushed towards the writing tip.

2.4 Arithmetic

Counting board

Counting was done until the twelfth century on the fingers, with tally systems, or with casting counters on a counting board. From the twelfth century onwards, a new method of counting using Hindu-Arabic figures, the number 0, and ink and parchment came into use, but it was introduced slowly and both methods existed side by side throughout the Later Middle Ages.⁷⁵ In the Netherlands, schools or teachers advertising that they taught counting call it ‘penninghen legghen’ (laying counters) well into the sixteenth century, which indicates that this method was the one most frequently used in secondary schools.

The counting board is called ‘abacus’ in Latin and works like the abacus with coloured beads still used in the twentieth century – a depiction on a 1516 tapestry from Heiningen shows it greatly resembling the modern version, with coloured discs on lines.⁷⁶ Each line represents a certain number, and counters are placed until a line is full, when a counter for the sum reached is put on the corresponding line and the first line is cleared. The end sum is noted down using Roman figures. The board was used horizontally, with lines indicating 1, 10, 100 etc. from top to bottom. Counters were placed on the lines, or in between, where a counter is half the value of the line above. Very intricate sums can be done on the abacus: it was used for *computus*, the calculation of the date of Easter as well.

An abacus can be inscribed in the sand or on a table, but it could also be a separate board. A chestnut counting table from the first half of the sixteenth century has been preserved in Basel; it measures 71 x 130 cm, is 77 cms high and holds three neat counting boards.⁷⁷ A depiction in the 1508 *Margarita Philosophica* of Gregor Reisch shows a counting table with counters next to a table on which Arabic numbers are written with ink. Here, the two methods are presented as a

72 Baart et al 1977: 381.

73 Amsterdam Archaeology Service, inv. no. MZ3-1203.

74 At least 24 graphite holders are present in the stores, dating from the last quarter of the sixteenth well into the eighteenth century; just a few were published, see: Baart et al 1977: 381.

75 Kool 1999.

76 London, Victoria & Albert Museum (‘Rose of Heiningen’, from the nunnery of Heiningen in Saxony), see: Tezmen-Siegel 1985: Abb. 48; Braun 2005.

77 Basel, Historisches Museum, inv. no. 1892.209, see: D’Haenens 1986: 194.



ill. 46. 'New' and 'old' counting system, personified by Boethius and Pythagoras, woodcut in Gregor Reisch, *Margarita Philosophica*, Basel 1535. Leiden, Museum Boerhaave, Inst. 322, page 267. © Museum Boerhaave.

'confrontation' between Pythagoras representing the 'classic' system and Boethius representing the new one (ill. 46). Counting was done on portable writing tablets as well: many of the representations of 'Arithmetica' (see Chapter 6) are using counting boards with holes for holding them.

Casting counter

For the laying of numbers on the *abacus*, round metal fiches were used, normally called 'jetons' in French, 'Rechenpfennig' in German and 'rekenpenning' in Dutch. In principle, any coin or flat round disc could be used as a casting counter, but the counter became a specialist product of lead-alloy casters in the sixteenth century and large numbers were recovered from many urban excavations, including from the Grammar school in Gorinchem (see § 3.3), showing that counting was taught here as well.

Excavated pennies are usually quite worn and it is not always easy to identify the casting counters. But easily recognizable is a type of counter from Nuremberg in Germany, that is called 'Schulpfennig' (school penny) and appropriately shows

ill. 47. Casting counters with alphabet and counting master, 1575-1625. Leiden, National Museum of Antiquities, inv.nos. zn 19a-f.
© Peter Jan Bomhof.



an alphabet on one side and someone counting on the other (ill. 47); the person can be an old man (a teacher?) or a young man (a pupil?) and is labelled 'Rechenmeister' (Master of counting). Sometimes the text is more elaborate: a penny now in Brussels has the alphabet on one side, surrounded by the inscription 'FLEISIGE RECHNUNG MACHT RICHTIKEIT' (Diligent counting leads to rightness), while the counting master on the backside shows the name of the maker, 'Hanns Krauwinkel in Nur[emberg]'.⁷⁸ A specimen now in Paris shows the alphabet, a young boy counting, and the date 1553.⁷⁹

Arithmetic book

For teaching and learning arithmetic, specialized books were used. Arithmetic books for counting with casters were already used in Antiquity, while Italian manuscripts for counting using Hindu-Arabic numerals are known at least from 1202, when Leonardo Fibonacci's famous *Liber Abaci* appeared. From the fifteenth and sixteenth century, 36 different 'rekenboeken' (arithmetic books) in Dutch are known, of which 24 are printed editions, the first from 1508;⁸⁰ these books have been published in an exemplary fashion by Marjolein Kool.⁸¹ They were used widely, in secondary schools, universities and for individual study, and some of the authors of the arithmetic books were schoolmasters themselves. Kool sketches the intended audience, the use and the possibilities as a source of the arithmetic literature as follows: 'In general they seem to have addressed a young, male audience with a basic education, in many cases probably the pupils of the *French school*, who, by means of practical problems in the arithmetic books, were trained to become merchants or technical, administrative or financial practitioners. Some authors also addressed adult pupils, who probably used the books for self-study or as a reference book to look for algorithms and to consult tables of coin values, weights and measures. It could also serve as a ready reckoner. The tables and many realistic problems can supply information for today's researcher about the sixteenth-century economy and society. Yet these data ought to be handled with great care because they come from school books'.⁸²

⁷⁸ Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek Albert I, Penningkabinet, see: D'Haenens 1986: 195.

⁷⁹ Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Cabinet des Médailles, see: *École au Moyen Age* 2007: 22.

⁸⁰ Kool 1999: 24.

⁸¹ Kool 1999.

⁸² Kool 1999: 377.



ill. 48. Pair of compasses, found in Boskoop, sixteenth century. Alphen, Provinciaal Depot van Bodemvondsten Zuid-Holland, no inv.no. © Peter Jan Bomhof.



ill. 49. Armillary sphere explained, woodcut in Gregor Reisch, *Margarita Philosophica*, Basel 1535. Leiden, Museum Boerhaave, Inst. 322, page 546. © Museum Boerhaave.

ill. 50. Astrolabe, used in Oxford, c.1370. Oxford, Museum of the History of Science, inv.no. 47901. © Science Museum.



Instruments

When geometry, music and astrology were taught, a number of instruments could be used in the lessons: pairs of compasses, square sundials, planispheres, astrolabes, armillary spheres, globes, maps, devices holding lenses, sheet music and musical instruments as well. None of these is known from excavations in schools, but they have been depicted as used in lessons (see Chapter 4) and as attributes of the personifications of the arts of the Quadrivium (see Chapter 6). Brass compasses have been found during excavations and metal-

detecting, including recently in Boskoop; the hinge of this sixteenth-century specimen with a maximal length of 8.9 cm still works (ill. 48).

The instruments used can be divided into four categories: sundials, astrolabes, spheres and quadrants. The sundial is the simplest device, used for measuring time from the shadow cast by the 'gnomon' (needle). Quadrants could be designed for either measuring or time-telling (horary quadrants). The astrolabe (see ill. 50) or *astrolabium planum* (because it is flat) consists of a flat planisphere with a grid for choosing the user's latitude, with a rotatable plate above a 'rete' (circle) with the sun's annual path in the form of a zodiac. This device also measures time, but is used for the solving of mathematical problems, for astronomical and astrological observations and in surveying as well. The armillary sphere (*armilla* means ring), of which there are diurnal and nocturnal versions, is a skeleton with rings imitating the course of the heavenly bodies (ill. 49). It was used for observations of the sky by day and by night, and continued to be used for demonstrations and instructing long after globes had come into use.

Although originating in the East, the most beautiful specimen of astrolabes and spheres were made in sixteenth-century Europe. Many of these scientific instruments have been preserved above ground, in specialized collections that arose in the seventeenth century. Four of the largest collections, all originally attached to a famous university – Museum of the History of Science Oxford, British Museum London, Museo della Scienza Florence, Museum Boerhaave Leiden – have combined their collections of medieval and Renaissance scientific instruments dated before 1600 into the database 'Epact'.⁸³ This database also supplies detailed information on how these instruments functioned. It holds just one instrument that undoubtedly functioned in a school-related context: a fourteenth-century astrolabe made for use in Oxford and still belonging to Oriel College (ill. 50).⁸⁴

2.5 Carrying

Wax tablet case

For carrying, writing tablets and styluses were put into cases that could be worn hanging from the belt. Sometimes the tablets had their own case (ill. 51), while a second elongated case held the styluses, thus forming a two-part writing case. But various solutions were found for putting both wax tablets and a stylus into a single case. The smallest writing pegs were made to fit into a writing case: rests of a 3.5 cm short iron stylus were found on the last tablet of a very tiny fourteenth-century codex of eight boxwood tablets of 5 x 3 cm in a leather case with suspension cord excavated at York; the stylus must have been put alongside the tablets in the lower part of the leather case and was made to fit.⁸⁵

A clever solution for keeping wax tablets and writing peg together is can be witnessed in a mid-fifteenth-century find of five closely written wax tablets in a leather case from Brielle, where the brass stylus was used to close the case, put through horizontal incisions in both lid and body of the case (ill. 52).⁸⁶ Room for the stylus could also be made on the side of the case for the tablets or inside, as a wooden wax tablet case from Maghera (co. Derry) in Ireland shows.⁸⁷ There, an excavated set of wooden tablets, still covered in wax, was in a leather case, and the end tablet is higher, with ledges that form a recess for the stylus along the largest side.

83 Accessible online at www.mhs.ox.ac.uk/epact (June 2007).

84 Oxford, Museum of the History of Science, inv.no. 47901.

85 Lalou 1992: 307-322.

86 Carmiggelt 2004.

87 Dublin, National Museum of Ireland, inv.no. Wk 378.



ill. 52. Wax tablet case with stylus, found in Brielle, reconstruction. Rotterdam, Bureau Oudheidkundig Onderzoek Rotterdam. Drawing taken from: Carmiggelt 2004: 16.

ill. 51. Half of wax tablet case, found in Amsterdam, 1390-1410. Amsterdam, Archaeology Service, inv.no. NZK5-200-9. © Wiard Krook.

Writing case

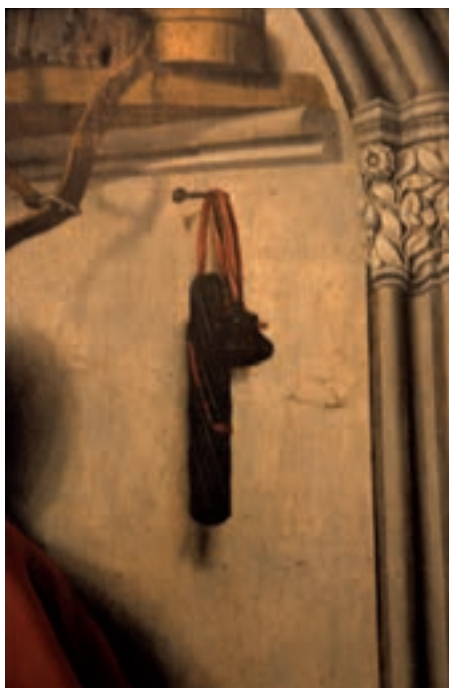
The writing case, called 'scrittoer' in Middle Dutch and *perpendicularum* in Latin, is the typical attribute of anyone writing. It consists of two pieces, either a rectangular wax tablet case and a circular case for writing pegs or, much more often, a small, round inkwell or inkwell case, and an elongated case for pens. Both cases have a lid and they are connected with straps. The writing case is usually made of leather and worn from the belt, and there are literally thousands of depictions of it. The lion's share of these are images of any of the four evangelists, who are shown writing in all types of art from early-Christian times onwards. The writing case, together with a scroll or piece of parchment or paper, is all that is necessary for writing. Therefore, the fixed attributes of the evangelists, the lion, ox, eagle and angel, many times are depicted holding the writing case up to Mark, Luke, John and Matthew. Because one can not write without this case, in some of the most exciting pictures of St. John on Patmos, writing his Apocalypse, the devil is trying to steal the case from the evangelist. In sculpture, the writing case made a recognizable attribute for a writer as well, and it is worn prominently by St. Birgitta, founder of a wide-spread order of convents and famous for the visions she wrote down: the writing case or inkwell is her specific attribute.⁸⁸

The precise construction of the double case can be understood from a portrait of the prophet Jeremiah painted by the so-called Master of the Annunciation of Aix, identified with Barthélemy d'Eyck, working in Aix-en-Provence from 1444 till 1472.⁸⁹ The side-panel shows the prophet standing and reading a book, under a shelf with a number of books, boxes and other scholarly items. A writing case is hanging from a nail in the wall, a clear depiction measuring about 20 cms of height in original (ill. 53). The cases are black, the straps red, indicating that the whole is made of leather with silk or velvet ribbons. The elongated leather case is stamped, and by cutting parallel incisions in the leather, loops have been created to conduct the ribbons. On the other side, the ribbons have been led alongside the lid of the

⁸⁸ Thordeman 1964, vol. IV: 223-225, 263-265 and plates in vol. V: 279-280 (with double writing case on the sculpted Marian altars from Sânga and Vada, early sixteenth century); Birgitta van Zweden 1986: 67-69, 77 (with inkwells on c.1480-1490 sculptures from Brabant, Lindblom 1918: frontispice (with inkwell and pencase on a c.1480 wallpainting from the church of Salem, now in Stockholm) and plates 5, 6, 9, 18 (with inkwells on other wallpaintings in Swedish churches).

⁸⁹ Brussels, Koninklijke Musea van Schone Kunsten, Oude Kunst, inv.no. 4494, see: Koninklijke Musea 1984: 338.

ill. 53. Double writing case, depicted on a painting with Jeremiah. Barthélemy d'Eyck, 1443-1445. Brussels, Royal Museums of Art, inv.no. 4494. © Author.



ill. 54. Double writing case, put together from finds from London. London, Museum of London, inv. nos. 4670 and 4882. © Author.

inkwell and through loops at the side of its body, to end in knots under the lid. In this way, the ink case can be pushed open, with the lid remaining fixed in the ribbons. How the lid of the pen case works is not clear from this depiction.

An elongated pen case with the lid still in place, found in Finsbury outside London and dating from before the sixteenth century⁹⁰ (ill. 54), not only shows the construction of its lid, but also how it looked on the inside. The large body part shows two loops on the sides, created by incisions in the outer leather shell. The far end of the straps (not preserved) would be knotted under these loops; traces of upward strain onto the loops can still be seen. Two loops placed slantwise on both sides of the lid would guide the straps upwards. From this preserved specimen, it is clear that the lid of the pen case worked exactly like that of the ink case: it could be pushed along the ribbons to open and close the case.

Inside this case, there are two rolled up pieces of leather, creating room for two sharp, thin objects, either pens or styluses. The diameter of these objects cannot have been more than 3 mm if the objects were to fit in the case, although the case may have shrunk a bit during its time in the soil and the subsequent drying of the leather. The pen case has a height of c.11 cm for the case and 3.5 cm for the lid that fits over it, with a diameter of 2 to 3 cm. The ribbons that went alongside the case and lid may not have been wider than 3 mm. These measurements demonstrate that the depiction of the writing case in the painting showing Jeremiah (see ill. 53) is within the range of lifesize.

Because people had to write when they went on the road too, inkstands and other kinds of containers were designed to hold all writing equipment in a single object and be transported easily. Certain of these objects were extravagant in design and made good gifts that underlined the receiver's social status and scholarly ambitions. A beautifully decorated writing case consisting of a circular inkwell

⁹⁰ London, Museum of London, inv.no. 4670.



ill. 55. *Schoolboy with basket, painting with scenes from the life of St. Anthony, Flanders, 1515-1525. New Orleans, Museum of Art, inv.no. 51.28. © Museum of Art.*

case (10 cm high, diameter 7 cm) and a case (15 cm long) with compartments for two pens made in Italy in the fifteenth century is in the collection of the Musée de Cluny in Paris.⁹¹ But also very modest specimens are known. Found in the context of a school find complex of the late sixteenth century in Alpirsbach (see § 3.7) was a small leather sheath, stamped with lozenges and palmets, its back seam torn open, that clearly showed on the front side the forms of a small knife and two tapering writing implements⁹² that were carried in it for such a long time as to have left clear impressions in the leather. Of course, a purpose-designed writing case was not a necessity and writing implements must often have been carried in multifunctional cases, or put loosely into a purse or school bag. Still, the depictions indicate that the double writing case was very common, probably because the sharp points of pens and the liquid ink did ask for a secure way of being carried around.

91 Paris, Musée National du Moyen Age, inv.nos. Cl. 12532a (inkwell case) and b (pen case), see: *Benedictus en zijn monniken* 1980: 223.

92 *Mönche und Scholaren* 1995: 53.

School basket

In a depiction of the pupils killing their teacher St. Felix (see ill. 235), one of them is using a open basket as a weapon, while another basket with the lid closed is hanging from a hook in the wall. These reed baskets were probably used for carrying equipment to and from school. More children in school scenes, both boys and girls, are depicted with a basket over their arm when they are going to school. In an elaborately coloured relief on the outside of the choir wall in Amiens cathedral,⁹³ a girl is being taken to school by a man on crutches; the girl is carrying a round basket (see cover ill.). A reed basket with a wider opening is in the foreground of an elaborate two-storied school engraved by Dirck Vellert in 1523 (see ill. 117); in the group of young and older girls on the ground floor one of the mistresses is also holding a basket over her arm. Reed work is seldom found intact in an archaeological context; as far as I know, no school basket has yet been identified as such, but its construction and use can be understood from the images.

In a painting showing various scenes of the life of St. Anthony, made in Flanders around 1515-1525,⁹⁴ two scenes from the saint's youth are pictured in the top zone (ill. 55). In the left top corner, the young saint is taken to school by his parents; he is presented to a teacher in doctor's robes, sitting in a chair holding a rod, with pupils sitting and standing around him. Young Anthony is wearing a long blue tunic and semi-long hair; on his left arm he is carrying a basket with a lid. In the second scene, beneath the school to the right, is Anthony again, giving his cloak to a beggar. Here, he is depicted bigger and older, with a round face and short hair. He can be recognized by the same blue tunic, although worn with a belt this time, and the basket standing at his feet indicates that he is still a schoolboy. In this depiction, the basket is bigger and stands alone, so its construction can be discerned: the circular lid is fastened to the basket with a ring around the handle; this ring will slide along the handle when the lid is pushed upwards, so the basket can be opened but the lid will not fall off or get lost. Practical solutions like this are found with almost all cases and containers used by pupils; all lids are constructed in a way that will prevent them from getting lost. In the scene with St. Felix (see ill. 235), the basket on the wall is shut, while the lid of the one used as a weapon has slid open, but is still dangling from the handle by a ring.

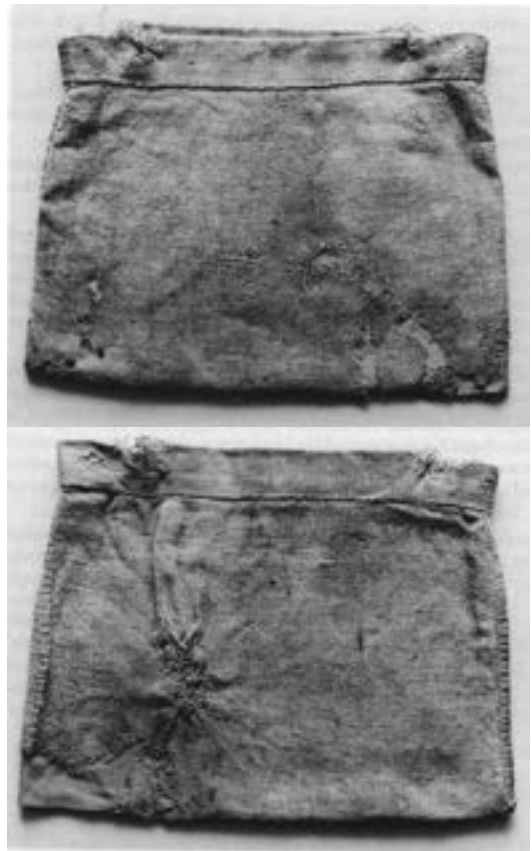
Schoolbag

In addition to the baskets, two schoolbags are represented in the image of the martyrdom of St. Felix (see ill. 235), one used to hit the master, and one hanging from the rack on the wall. Both have a similar construction: a large purse on a sling, with three tassels on the bottom. The colours however seem different from each other, as is the way the flap over the top is closed. The bag in the pupil's hand is pale in colour and has a hole in the flap, through which a toggle is pulled. The bag on the rack is much darker and a sort of 'corduroy' texture is indicated, while the bag seems to be closed with a cord ending in little tassels inside the flap. Because of the tassels, the colours, and textures, I think the artist has meant to depict bags of textile, not of leather, although of the dark one we cannot be sure. Moreover, leather bags must have been used for school as well.

School bags are only rarely displayed inside a school this way, but they are part of the common outfit of someone on his way to or from school. Such a bag is worn over the shoulder by the small St. Benedict walking to school in a 1457 lead-glazed window in the city church of St. Benedict in Biel in Switzerland (see ill. 138)⁹⁵ and by

93 St. Honeste appointed as teacher for St. Firmin, tetralobed relief in a series of depictions from the life of St. Firmin le Martyr, made in Amiens c.1530, see § 4.3 and ill. 144.

94 Most probably originating from Brussels, now in New Orleans, Museum of Art, inv.no. 51.28, see: Koldeweij 2000 and Koldeweij 2006: 61-65 and ill. 3.36.



the schoolboy personifying the age of *pueritia* (childhood) man in an Austrian manuscript of roughly the same date⁹⁶ (ill. 56). In both cases, it may be a leather bag that was indicated. But in whatever material they came, all these schoolbags are simple, closable purses of modest sizes, looking very much like those worn by other people in society, except that they had a sling because they were carried over the shoulder. When (part of) such a purse was excavated, it would not be easy to identify it as a school bag.

School sack

Another type of schoolbag, cheaper and because of the material used not likely to withstand the test of time, was a simple rectangular linen sack, with seams on the sides and horizontal straps dragged through the top; it was gathered shut by pulling the straps on both sides. A lucky find because of its preservation in a dry context, a bag like this (ill. 57) was found stuffed under the roof of the convent of Alpirsbach in southern Germany, between a bunch of other paper, leather and textile objects left from a monastic school that functioned there in the second half of the sixteenth century (see § 3.7). This broad linen bag is 37 cms wide and 28 cms high.⁹⁷

The bag could be identified only with certainty when compared with a depiction of this very same sort of bag in the autobiographical manuscript by Matthäus Schwarz (see § 4.4), in the image where he has left school and thrown his equipment on the ground; he is trampling a white bag with a book sticking out of

ill. 56. 'Puer' depicted as schoolboy in *Concordantia caritatis* of Ulrich von Lilienfeld. New York, The Morgan Library, M.1045, f 258v. © Morgan Library.

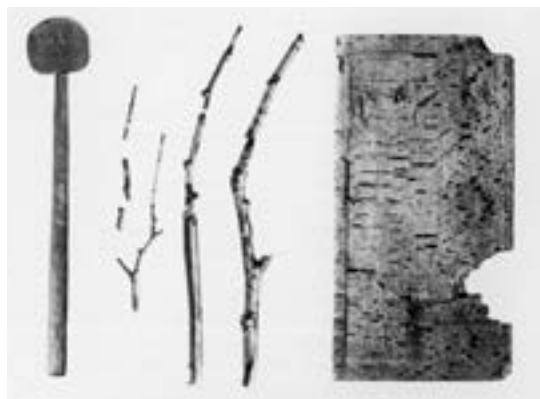
ill. 57. School sack from the reformatory school in Alpirsbach, 1556-1595. Photo taken from: Fingerlin 1997: 119.

95 Beer 1965: 170, Tafel 149 and colour plate following p. 164.

96 New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, ms M.1045, mid-fifteenth century Austrian copy of Ulrich von Lilienfeld's *Concordantia caritatis*, f 258v, see: Sears 1986: ill. 52.

97 *Mönche und Scholaren* 1995: 53.

ill. 58. *Paddle (half-sized), twigs of a rod and writing tablet from a girl's grave along the Voorstraat in Dordrecht, c.1450. Photo taken from: Hallewas 1984: 321.*



it, some papers and a double writing case (see ill. 149). In the German text that goes with this image, Matthäus describes the act portrayed by ‘warf ich den schulsack wegg’ (I threw away the school sack) and ‘school sack’ seems a fitting term for this type of bag. In this image the white bag has black straps; a similar school sack can be seen in other images in this costume book and that of Veit Konrad Schwarz,⁹⁸ sometimes red or black as well, always showing the gathers, and always carried over one shoulder by a simple sling.

2.6 Punishment

Rod

A rod was used for punishing children in general. Since the instrument was made by tying together a bundle of twigs, usually from birch trees, hitting someone with a rod is called birching as well. Because it was a bundle of twigs, the remains of a rod are difficult to recognize in an archaeological context, but the twigs recovered from a girl's grave in Dordrecht could be identified as a rod by the presence of a paddle and a writing tablet in the same grave (ill. 58). A bundle of twigs with winding around them, found in the Gorinchem grammar school, may have been the handle of a rod, but could have belonged to a small brush equally.

Rods occur frequently in medieval art, not only as part of punishment scenes involving children, but also as an object for flagellation – notably that of Christ – and in parodies, where, for instance, a woman is chastising a man by hitting him with a rod. As an attribute of teachers, the rod is depicted in many school scenes, and also in a metaphorical sense when someone is personifying a teacher, as in almost all allegories of Grammar (see Chapter 6). Because it was connected so strongly to being corrected for bad work at school, the rod was used in prints as one of the symbols of ignorance.⁹⁹

‘Plak’ (paddle)

The object called ‘plak’ in Dutch is a wooden handle of about 20 to 25 cms ending in a flat, circular head measuring 5 to 8 cms in diameter. It was used exclusively at school, by the teacher, to slap the fingers of pupils when they did not know their lessons or when they were not behaving themselves. A child had to place its hand on a table, bench, or lectern, or in the hand of the master, who would give it a few slaps on the fingers. That hurt. The ‘plak’ was used as early as the fourteenth century and well into the twentieth. It inspired two set phrases in Dutch still used widely: ‘onder

98 Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, ms H 27 (no 67a): f 10 (red bag with red sling), f 14 (red bag with black sling), f 15 (red bag), f 16 and 17 (white or pale brown bag, cloak thrown over it); on f 18, where Matthäus is serving his father, he has no bag or writing case anymore. In the costume book of Matthäus' son Veit Konrad – Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, ms H 27 (no 51) – the school sack can be seen on f 9 (red bag with pale grey sling) and f 10 and 11 (black bag with pale sling); on f 13, where Veit Konrad is working as a clerk, the bag is absent.

99 German woodcut c.1480-1490, see: Reicke 1971: 47.

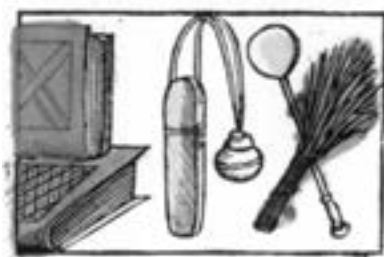


ill. 59. Teacher with paddle and pupil, *Book of Hours, Utrecht, c.1460. The Hague, Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum, 10 F 50, f 121r.* © MMW.

de plak zitten' (in English: being paddled around) that means being dominated – especially a man by his wife – and 'op de vingers tikken' (slapping the fingers) which is colloquial speech for correcting someone. Being tied to school punishment, the 'plak' is the teacher's attribute pre-eminently and often depicted to underline his function, as in a Northern Netherlandisch manuscript by the Master of the Hours of Catherine of Cleves, now in The Hague¹⁰⁰ (ill. 59), where a master with a marked wooden (light-brown coloured) paddle is testing a pupil kneeling before his chair. The figures are placed in an initial H at the beginning of the Hours of the Cross in Dutch, of which the first lines ask for God's help in speaking the Holy

100 The Hague, Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum, 10 F 50, f 121r, see: *Golden Age* 1990: 163.

ill. 60. Emblem of a teacher, with books, writing case, paddle and rod, from a sheet with woodcut emblems, Dutch, c.1500. Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, inv.no. BdH 14127. © BVB.



ill. 61. Three paddles, from the Brinkmann-site in Haarlem. Haarlem, Archaeology Service. © Theo Bottelier.



texts; the inspiration necessary for the young (young person) on his head. In a series of emblems made around 1530,¹⁰¹ an emblem with books and a rod and paddle crossed (ill. 60) stand for a teacher and may well have been used as an insignia of some sort.

Three 'plakken' were found in a cesspit in Haarlem, dated to the fifteenth century (ill. 61). All three were sawn in one piece from a plank and received almost no finishing. Two are made of oak and one of beech; the latter one has a house-mark at the end of the handle: a St. Andrew's Cross between two vertical lines. The beech 'plak' is also the largest one, measuring 34.7 x 1.7 cms, while the head has a diameter of 8.4 cms. The oak ones are in the same range of measurement.¹⁰² When its location is considered, the house at the Smedenstraat where the paddles were found may well have belonged to someone working at the Haarlem city school (see § 3.6).¹⁰³

More 'plakken' have been found in the Netherlands. One already mentioned (see ill. 58) was found together with a writing tablet and twigs of a rod – another object for punishment – in a grave at Dordrecht, dated to the first half of the fifteenth century. Another 'plak' was found in Oldenzaal, in the house of one of the vicars of the former Latin school there. It dates from the period 1525-1580 (see ill. 11). Four further possible paddles that were found in the Leiden Grammar school seem to date from the fifteenth well into the seventeenth century; a fifth, considerably larger, possible paddle was found elsewhere in the city centre.¹⁰⁴ Another possible paddle was excavated from the 'Parade', the square in front of the cathedral at Bois-le-Duc¹⁰⁵ – it seems that these objects are just beginning to be recognized. The oldest two paddles known are dated to c.1370 and ended up in the sewer of the former grammar school of Lübeck (see § 3.5). All paddles found can be linked directly to a school or a teacher.

There does not seem to be an English word for this object specifically; paddle, rod, ferule, and birch all have been suggested, but all denote something slightly different. This is even more puzzling, as the oldest depiction of a paddle known is on the painted wooden ceiling of the cathedral of Peterborough, dated to the thirteenth century. It is notable that in English, French and Italian manuscripts we find almost no depictions of a 'plak' – with just a few exceptions (see ill. 98). In these manuscripts it is usually just the rod that is displayed in depictions of school punishment. There is a Danish wall-painting in the church of Tuse (Sjælland) of c.1460-1480 showing a teacher with a paddle and rod awaiting the Jesus child who is brought to school by his parents (ill. 62). The word for this object in Danish is 'ferle'

101 Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, inv.no. BdH 14127, see also: Nijhoff 1933: Plate 371, no. 10.

102 Van Greevenbroek 1980: 120. The other measurements: one is 31.5 cms long, 1.6 cms thick and has a head of 8.2 cms wide, the other is 27 x 0.6 cms, its head 7.4 cms.

103 With thanks to Theo Bottelier of the archaeological working party (AWN) Haarlem, who traced the information on the cesspit and the site, and who is still trying to locate the objects.

104 Alphen, Provinciaal Depot van Bodemvondsten Zuid-Holland, inv. nos. h 1983/7.46-22, 33, 34 and 35 (from the school) and h 1992/8.181 (22 cm long, diameter head 10 cm, from the Ir. Driessenplein). They have not been recognized as paddles before.

105 Bois-le-Duc, Archaeological Service, i 6741.



ill. 62. *Jesus brought to school, awaited by a teacher with a paddle. Painting in Tuse church, Denmark, c.1450. Photo taken from: Nedkvitne 2004: 185.*

and in Swedish ‘färla’ (both cognates of ‘ferule’); there is a ‘ferle’ (18.9 cms long) in the museum of Ribe (Denmark)¹⁰⁶ and a smallish ‘färla’ (c.25 cms long, head c.4 cms wide) was found in Stockholm,¹⁰⁷ where a school is mentioned from 1315 onwards. The handle is broken off at the bottom end; it is broadened towards the top and shows a mark: a cross between two vertical lines (like one of the Haarlem ‘plakken’). In Flemish, Dutch and German manuscripts, paddles are present from the beginning of the fourteenth century (see ill. 94);¹⁰⁸ while a 1499 sculpted wooden altar from Lübeck shows St. Vitus, holding a paddle as his attribute.¹⁰⁹

2.7 Production and sale of school equipment

All the objects used in school mentioned above, had to be produced, and none of them seem to have been home-made. In fact, as there were many schoolchildren, in addition to an even greater number of people who needed to write and read and count – and hit – these objects were produced in large quantities, by specialized craftsmen, and selling them could be a speciality of a market stand or ambulant street seller as well.

One of the crafts portrayed in the *Stiftungsbücher* of the ‘Zwölfbrüderhäuser’ (Twelve Brothers’ Houses) in Nuremberg of 1565, a sort of guild homes,¹¹⁰ shows a ‘kalamalmacher’, someone who has specialized in making leather inkwells (ill. 63). The inkwells are of the portable type known from the Groningen school (see § 3.1) and from the Museum of London (see ill. 41). Ink itself could be prepared by schoolmasters and sold to their pupils: the 1591 rhyming manual for schoolmasters by Valcoogh (see § 1.3) gives a recipe for ‘good black ink as it is sold to the children’.¹¹¹

A large print with depictions of almost two hundred of the street sellers in Rome in 1582¹¹² includes sellers of books and writing equipment, like those selling ‘lunario novo’ (new calendars), ‘libraro’ (bookseller), ‘le belle historie’ (story books), ‘tinta di scrivere’ (writing ink) and ‘toccalapis e penna’ (pencils and pens), while berets, the favourite headgear of students, scholars and pupils alike, could be bought either new or used, from the ‘berettaro’ (berets man) or from the seller

106 Ribe, Town Museum, inv.no. D01659, from an urban context; thanks to Claus Feveile for sharing this information. See also Krüger 2002: 133.

107 Stockholm, Medeltidsmuseet, inv. no. 03101.

108 See also: D’Haenens 1986: 257 (in German manuscript of 1477).

109 Heise and Vogeler 1993: 79–81, see: Mührenberg and Falk 2001: 114–115.

110 See: Nummenhoff 1924: Beilage 6; I am indebted to Ralf Mulsow, municipal archaeologist of Rostock, for this reference.

111 Schotel 1875: 91.

112 British Museum, Prints room, 1947-3-19-26 (173), with the inscription ‘Romae Claudii ducheti formis nepotis antonii Safrerii 1582 Ambrosius brambilla fecit.’

9. Peter heymlich kalauermaacher ward jnns Leiden gantz
 genommen an Sant Michels tag jn 1559 jar vnd
 ist gestorben den 19. Nouembri/ Anno 21. 1565
 jnns alters jn 55 jar/ Ist also jn Leiden gantz
 gewest 6 jar/ 7 wochen vnd 2 tag/ ward/ biß
 der Geiser Peter genant dem Gott gnade





ill. 64. *Alphabet book seller, part of the 'cries of Paris', sixteenth century. Paris, Arsenal Library, Est. 264 Rés. © BNF.*

of 'berette vecchie' (old berets). Fair enough, there is almost nothing portable that cannot be bought by one of the street sellers on this print, but still. The sellers are shown with tens of blank sheets and rolls sticking out of their baskets, books in their hands, and small cases full of pens. The beret seller has a box full of the things and has put one of his head, and the ink seller not only holds a large jar of ink and a funnel for refills, but sells leather inkwells too. In this print, there is at least a hint of the abundance of these objects that must have once been reality – and that got lost. We must not forget that many of these school and writing materials were among the cheapest and most perishable items sold in the streets of Rome, and that consequently almost nothing is preserved. A French counterpart (ill. 64), part of the 'Cris de Paris' (cries of Paris) shows a street seller who carries on his chest a tray full of printed books, with his cry printed above: 'Beaulx ABC belles heures' – he has concentrated his sale on alphabet books and books of hours or almanacs.¹¹³

ill. 63. *Inkwell maker, depicted in the Hausbuch of the Landauerschen Zwölfbrüderstiftung, sixteenth century. Nuremberg, City Library, Amb. 279.2°, f 45v. © Stadtbibliothek Nürnberg.*

¹¹³ Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Est. 264 Rés.

A collection of various objects, including a large dark brown leather bag, a small dark bowl, a wooden block, a long wooden stick, a metal ring, and several pieces of wood and leather, arranged on a white surface.



SCHOOL LIFE EXCAVATED

3.1 Groningen: What pupils left behind

In 1993, archaeological investigations preceded the building of a new county hall in the inner city of Groningen, in the North of the Netherlands, on a site called Singelstraat, near the Sint-Maartenskerk (church of St. Martin).¹ Here, an extremely large cesspit (9 x 4 m, capacity around 40 m³) was discovered, that revealed a large number of finds in an extraordinary find pattern. Largely absent was the common household waste like food remains and broken kitchen ware that may be expected in most cesspits. Instead, the pit produced all kinds of items used for eating, learning, and play (ill. 65). What had been found was the cesspit of the early modern grammar school of Groningen, the 'Latijnse school'.

The presence of a grammar school at this site in the sixteenth century is also known from a document of 1601 that states that 'St. Martin's school will be used and furnished as a county hall'.² This was the building now known as the old city hall, with the school from the second half of the sixteenth century still standing (see ill. 236). The cesspit is located to the south-east of that site, across a street called 'Achter de muur' (Behind the Wall) then. The pit was dug deep into this wall, the former earthwork rampart that became superfluous after the city had been expanded and a new moated city-wall had been created further out. This must have happened around 1500. Somewhat later, the instable situation within the rampart caused the pit to collapse, after which it was no longer used. The pit was created as a cesspit and there is no evidence that it was ever cleared out before it collapsed. By 1550 the site was covered with houses. Therefore, this cesspit was in use some of the time between 1500 and 1550 and all the finds from the pit must date to this first half of the sixteenth century.

A cesspit functions primarily as the store of the toilet(s) above. In this case, one toilet hole was documented and the location of other toilet holes was revealed by a significantly worse condition of material directly underneath some spots, at regular intervals, combined with the presence there of almost 300 small rectangular pieces of simple cloth, that may have been used as 'toilet paper'.³ When the pit was in use, small objects may have accidentally fallen into it. But as it was used as a waste-bin secondarily, most of the items that ended up in the pit must have been thrown in deliberately. As we will see, things were not only discarded because they were broken, but may have been flung away after they had been confiscated too. That explains why both worn out and complete objects were recovered from the school's cesspit.

1 Excavations in October 1993 by the Gemeente Groningen in collaboration with the Stichting Monument & Materiaal, supervised by municipal archaeologist Gert Kortekaas.

2 'Sunte Maertensschoole tot een provciehuijs [...] employeert ende accomodeert sall worden', see: Hermus 1987: 11.

3 Zimmerman 2000: 44.

ill. 66. *Inkhorns and inkwells from the Grammar School of Groningen. © Author.*



ill. 67. *Wax tablet book from the Grammar School of Groningen. © Author.*



Some of the finds, like a set of wax tablets, the wooden tip of a pen, two inkhorns and the remains of three inkwells – one decorated at the bottom – point directly to the practice of writing in the school to which this waste pit belonged (ills. 66 & 67). A number of knives found here (ill. 68) may well have been used as penknives for sharpening pen tips (see § 2.3). The nine wax-tablets, that form a notebook, and remains of books like fragments of leather bindings and pieces of parchment have been interpreted as teachers' possessions,⁴ but their ownership is uncertain. In any case, they point to the practice of writing, divided into writing with styluses on wooden tablets covered with wax and writing with pen and ink on parchment or paper. It is tempting to see scribbling in wax as temporary and neat writing on paper as more permanent, but in this case remains of both have ended up as waste in the same context. From this evidence, it cannot be concluded that the two methods were rated differently.

⁴ Hermans and Huisman 1996: 20, 23.



ill. 68. Knives, likely used as penknives, from Groningen, sixteenth century. Groningen, Stichting Monument & Materiaal, site nos. 369, 273 and 265. © Author.

Other finds, like wooden bowls and spoons, point to eating. It is known from written sources as well that school boys received communal meals in between their lessons. That they had plenty of time to play on the school premises too can be deduced from the large number of toys and playthings that ended up in the cesspit (ill. 69). There were four wooden spinning tops, all split, showing they were used for throwing and hacking other tops. The five excavated knucklebones were all weighted with lead, as they were used for games of skittles, and the heavier they are, the firmer they stand on the ground and the harder they can be thrown. A small bone disc with a hole and a slate disc with five holes would have been used as buzzers. Two wooden balls may have gone astray, whilst a gaming piece and a marble made of wood are among the things that may have got lost.



ill. 69. Toys in plastic bags from the Grammar School of Groningen. © Author.

ill. 70. *Knife from the Grammar School of Groningen. © Author.*



Three pieces of el
piston, must have
be fired quite fast
within the classro

imagined that a teacher got fed up with the firing at some point, took the blowpipe from the boy and – ostentatiously? – threw it away.

The same may have happened with the complete pocket knife (ill. 70) that was recovered from the cesspit, among other knives. This pocket knife is not a cheap one, as the copper handle is engraved beautifully with a female saint holding a book on one side and a skull on the other. It may have been used as a penknife, but more likely was a multipurpose item, carried by one of the schoolboys. The presence of this knife among the waste may point to the confiscating of small weapons at school, but it can have been lost accidentally too. In either case, this must have been a great loss to the owner – and either way it shows that having your own pocket knife and proudly showing it to your classmates may have been a pupil's dream for a long, long time. Apart from the contents of their bags, items of the pupils' outfits were preserved too. There are a number of children's shoes and a complete belt, the latter measuring at maximum 70 cms, making it unsuitable for a grown-up waist.

Also a teacher unknowingly left a clue to his outfit. One of the most spectacular recoveries from this Groningen cesspit is a flat beret with rim and earflaps, well known from many scholar's and teacher's portraits (see ills. 12, 261 & 265). It has been interpreted as a teacher's beret, but schoolboys regularly wore berets of the same type; the perimeter for the head, measured 58-60 cms minimum, speaks in favour of a grown-up owner though. This excavated school headdress, as far as I know an unparalleled find, is made of wool, knitted, and was most likely black. When found, it was just one of a number of unsightly, muddy wads of brownish textile; it has been lovingly preserved and studied by Hanna Zimmerman, a volunteer with the Groningen Archaeology Service. Whilst reconstructing the beret by re-knitting a similar one from the pattern deduced from the original, she found out that it must have been washed 'too hot' and fullered after having been knitted, to achieve significant shrinkage. That is the only way the stiffness of the original beret could be achieved.⁵

3.2 Leiden: Records, finds, and a building

In the present-day Netherlands, some more excavations have been carried out on the sites of former schools. A special case is that in the old city of Leiden because here the results of the excavations could be combined with various evidence from the city archives and with a late-sixteenth century building still standing (ill. 71) at the corner of the 'Schoolsteeg' (School Alley) and the Lokhorststraat in the city centre, close to the most important medieval church, the 'Pieterskerk' (church of St. Peter).

⁵ Zimmerman 1998: 88-90; Zimmerman 2000.



ill. 71. Grammar school building of 1600 in Leiden.
© Author.

The Leiden school is mentioned for the first time in 1324, and the city was officially granted the privilege to keep school by the count of Holland in 1356, after a lot of wrangling.⁶ The school was situated in an alley on the northern side of the churchyard of St. Peter's church and referred to as the 'scole op 't hof' (the school in the court) in 1384.⁷ The location is written down very precisely in the 1431 charter, when the old school was replaced by a new one.⁸ Thus we can be sure that it was in the same location as the later building of 1600, facing the church – most convenient as the pupils would be singers in the church on feast-days. The street that runs along the left side of the school was known as 'school alley' even before the present building was constructed. The space around the school, including the street and the churchyard, were used by medieval (school) children as a playground – and children still play on the squares around the Pieterskerk – as is known from a city regulation that states that 'no-one from the school within ten feet of the school can play with chestnuts, knucklebones or do mischief, or make noise that might hinder the headmaster or disturb the children in the school'.⁹ In 1534 Leiden boys were reminded not to play catch in the school alley and the churchyard, as this distracted the Latin-learners inside the school from their lessons; when caught, their jerkins were confiscated and they could get those back by paying a price of '3 st.' (five-cent pieces) within three days.¹⁰

This school was the most important school in the city, the 'groote school' (main school) and it was a 'Latin school' where Latin was taught and spoken; a 1387 contract with headmaster Jan van Hokelem states that he will teach grammar and logic, and the preserved 1393 school regulations state exactly to what level Latin

6 Knappert 1904: 97-98; Marsilje 2002: 178.

7 '[...] in die steghe an die noortside van de kerchoven tussen Herman Willemssoens [huis] ende der scole op 't hof [...]', quoted in: Knappert 1904: 100.

8 '[...] die oude scole gelegen after sin erve streckende voir wter graft langes der steghe after to an die straet diemen totten hove gaet', quoted in: Knappert 1904: 139.

9 'So en moet niemant van der scole in X roeden nae de scole morellen, koten noch gheenrehande boeverie dair en binnen doen, noch gheruchte maken dair die rectoors bi ghehindert of die kinder in der scole bi ghestoort magh worden [...]', see: Knappert 1904: 100.

10 Cited in: Knappert 1905: 47-48.

had to be taught and that it was also supposed to be spoken by the pupils outside the school.¹¹ A regulation of 1350 mentions the school fee: 12 ‘groten’ a year for each child, to be paid directly to the teacher.¹² We can be sure that in 1393 and in the next two centuries there were other schools in the city. These so-called side schools (‘bijscholen’) were banned by the 1393 regulations, and laws of 1475 and 1535 forbid them to take in children between the ages of seven and 17, as they should all be sent to the main school, even if they, as a 1515 law adds, do not aspire to a clerical career, but just want to learn to write. The archival sources also permit a glimpse of the curriculum of the side school. There, reading in Dutch would be taught as well as writing, counting and French, and laying counters (‘legghe mit penningen’), that is, accounting on a counting board.¹³ This was a school customized for those who would be working in business and trade – most welcome in the center of cloth trade in Holland, we suppose. Other private schools made it possible to be educated after working hours (‘nae die wercklock’) or were just closer to home, especially important on dark and cold days,¹⁴ but side schools were always seen as extra, and the parents who sent their children to a side school had to pay a fine to the amount of the school fee to the master of the main school for ‘denying’ him their children as his pupils – in addition to what they had to pay the teacher of the side school.¹⁵ Interestingly, it is known from a will that in special cases girls could go to the grammar school. After attending a private school located in the street ‘Hogewoerd’ they were taught at the ‘Grote School’ for half a year, after which they went to practice needlework with the Leiden beguines. The school attracted pupils from the surrounding areas as well, even from the then famous abbey of Egmond: between 1389 and 1399 pupils from this abbey visited the Leiden grammar school, obviously a good one, while lodging with the commanders of the ‘Duitse Orde’ in the city.¹⁶

In the 1970s, students of the Technical University Delft carried out architectural-historical research in the main school building when that was being restored; they documented some of the older foundations of the school. During the groundwork, a well and a cesspit were found, which must have belonged to the school that was on this site before the new edifice was built. The large cesspit had a diameter of 3 metres

ill. 72. *Finds from the Leiden Grammar school, fifteenth century (and later). Alphen, Provinciaal Depot van Bodemvondsten Zuid-Holland, inv.no. h 1983/7.46.*
© Author.



11 '[...] grammariën ende in Logiken', see: Knappert 1904: 104; the full regulations are on p. 105-109.

12 'Wat kint te Leyden te scole gaet dat sel de scoolmeestr gheven van sinre leringe jairlix 16 grt. als in borsen gaet ende niet meer', quoted in: Knappert 1904: 99.

13 Knappert 1904: 118 and 127.

14 Knappert 1904: 122.

15 Knappert 1904: 99; the fee is '12 grt.'

16 Marsilje 2002: 179-180.



ill. 73. *Paddles from the Leiden Grammar school, fifteenth century (and later). Alphen, Provinciaal Depot van Bodemvondsten Zuid-Holland, inv.no. h 1983/7.46. © Author.*

and was 3 metres deep. While emptying it, a large number of ceramic and glass objects as well as some wooden things and a lot of fragments of leather emerged. Based on the shapes of the ceramic and glass, most objects from the cesspit are dated to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The wooden objects from the cesspit are among the most interesting finds (ill. 72).¹⁷ A large oak plank (137 x 35 x 3 cms) shows rough sketches of houses and a wall, besides some housemarks. Its function is not clear, but the execution of the drawings and the measurements of the piece permit the suggestion that these are pupils' scratchings in a school bench. A smaller piece of wood has a name on it, which may have been scratched by one of the pupils too and there is a wooden fragment that may have been a writing tablet. A beautiful small wooden bird (11 x 2 cms) with a long tail was found during more precise searching. A hole in the bottom shows that it may have been on a stick or a metal pin. It seems to represent a forktailed fly-catcher (*Muscicapa sarana*).¹⁸ This bird may have been a prized possession of one of the schoolboys, although we do not know what its use may have been and although it is not easily datable.

More familiar finds are wooden spoons, wooden bowls and a knife (see ill. 243). Spoons and bowls are definitely over-represented in this assembly, and these objects were used in school in between the lessons, when the schoolboys had meals. Their daily reality is also reflected in the fragments of three wooden combs with both large and small teeth, used for combing and delousing hair. Another familiar object is a wooden spinning top, a toy omnipresent in this period; there were at least some 50 tops of similar shapes found in the Netherlands that date from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.¹⁹ Like writing implements, cutlery and toys may be called common school objects – they have been found in almost all school excavations. The wooden punishment device known in Dutch as 'plak' (paddle), basically a flat round piece with a handle, is the typical attribute of a teacher (see § 2.6). In the Leiden school assemblage, there are as many as four objects that would have been used as paddles (ill. 73). The most complete one²⁰ measures 24.5 cms, with a head of 5.5 cms in diameter. They seem to cover a longer period of time.

An unusual find – similarly impossible to date precisely – is a ribbon with a small copper bell. It matches the size of a cat's neck and would have been its collar. The collar shows that its bearer must have been domesticated, and as cats were kept regularly inside buildings to keep mice and rats away, this one may have lost or got rid of its annoying strap and bell. But the find also brings to mind the cat skeletons that were in the cesspit of a pupils' home in Zwolle (see § 3.4) and we must consider the possibility that this cat was killed on purpose.

17 The objects are now in the Provinciaal Depot voor Bodemvondsten of the Province of Zuid-Holland in Alphen aan den Rijn (inv.nrs. h 1983/7.46); thanks go to Frits Kleinhuis for giving me every access there.

18 'Latijnse school' 1980.

19 Willemsen 1998: 401-404.

20 Inv.no. h 1983/7.46-22.

The leather fragments found mostly in the deepest layers of the cesspit were studied in detail by Carol van Driel-Murray.²¹ Her investigations show that most of them belong to one type of shoe and one type of patten, both dated closely to 1500. Four fragments of later footwear from the pit indicate that it remained in use in the seventeenth century, but was cleaned more often and more thoroughly than in the sixteenth century, leaving just small fragments from the later period. Among the leather from c.1500, there were three complete wooden pattens with leather tops and ten more top fragments, next to one fragment of a patten with a cork sole; pattens must have been in use quite commonly in this building. From the shoe fragments, nine more or less completely preserved leather shoes were reconstructed. These are constructed to fit well around the ankles, have a somewhat pointed sole, sometimes with a second sole attached, and have short laces that are tied on the inside. Van Driel-Murray notes a remarkable resemblance between these nine shoes, not only in shape and size, but also in details of construction and even of sewing.

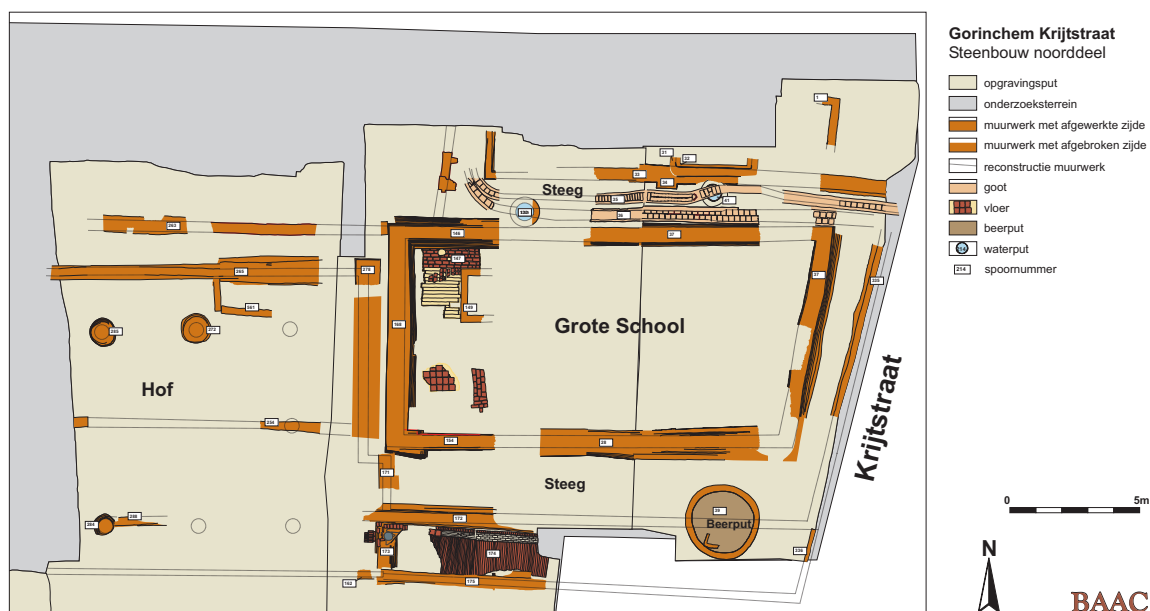
The soles of these nine shoes measure up to 25 cms and seem quite large for even a grown boy's footlength.²² But the fact that the shoes are so alike is suspicious and might have to do with the location of the find. It is known from medieval schools that shoes were among the gifts given to school children on festive days, like Holy Innocents, and shoes are also listed among the donations to school-going orphans. Shoes were a necessity for school children, and these nine examples might well represent a number of shoes made at the same time for the benefit of pupils. In the Middle Ages, leather shoes were very vulnerable to wear, especially outside, and even if pattens were worn regularly, the shoes still had to be replaced frequently. We can imagine that the shoes of schoolboys, who would have been running around playing and to and from school, with feet that were still growing, may have been in need of replacement all the time.

When these sources are combined, we find that the location of the school, next to the churchyard in the middle of the city, was not only practical for the pupils' and their master's church visits, but also well suited for the breaks in between the lessons, when the pupils would go out to play. Some of their games involved spinning tops, knucklebones and chestnuts, and they must have enjoyed themselves audibly, as their games had to be restricted by law, at least in the close vicinity of the school building. From the archival sources we know that some of the pupils boarded with the headmaster, and that a small house next to the school was bought by the city in 1525 to enlarge the home of the master. For those children, the school and its surroundings was the whole of their world. With the building still preserved, although its inside was much altered later on, it is clear that the new building of 1600 was an improvement for both masters and pupils; from a situation where all of the school was in one or two rooms – a common occurrence in the Middle Ages – they had moved to a building with six rooms that housed six classes. This means there were also at least six teachers then.

A rare insight in the daily life of the children at this school is given by an account of the well-known children's crime of stealing fruit, committed by two pupils and the punishment allocated subsequently, as written down in the city's 'Correctieboek' (punishment book) on August 19, 1521. Two pupils of the 'Groote School', Baerndt and Augustijn Jansz., had gone through a ditch into a garden to steal apples and pears, as they often did, against the owner's objections. The youngest would be standing guard, while the oldest filled his pockets. The thieves

21 Van Driel-Murray 1980.

22 It is hard to link age to shoe size, especially in retrospect; in an email of May 15th 2007, Carol van Driel-Murray stated that these are all for grown-ups, and that she would expect shoes shorter than 19 cms for children.



were caught and brought to trial. There, a friend spoke in their favour and they got away with a light punishment that was to be carried out inside the school. The boys had to beat each other with rods under supervision of the court which would be present, in such a way that the oldest, who was most rebellious, would be beaten most.²³ The rods necessary would have been ready in the Leiden school, as they were used by all teachers to punish pupils; their presence underlines the private justice granted to the schools.

ill. 74. Plan of the excavated foundations of the Gorinchem Grammar school. © BAAC.

3.3 Gorinchem: A school around 1600

Recent discoveries in Gorinchem further reinforce the general picture drawn by these school excavations and take us to the end of the sixteenth century. On the site 'Krijtstraat' opposite the tower of the main church, the remains of a school were found in the autumn of 2002.²⁴ From written sources it was already known that a school must have been located here at least since the fifteenth century; the alley running along the right side of the terrain, nowadays called 'Knipsteeg' was recorded as 'Schoelsteeg' (School Alley) by 1435. Later, an '(old) city school' is mentioned here between 1547 and 1606; after this date the school is referred to as 'municipal Latin school'. A school remained on this location well into the 1970s. The building found (ill. 74) dated back to the fifteenth century, measured 6 x 10 m, and had an open courtyard at the back surrounded by some sort of gallery.²⁵ The assemblage of finds excavated dates to the period of c.1500 to c.1630 and can be considered a closing stage for my study.

Besides broken kitchenware and glass, a lot of writing equipment (styluses, slate pencils, pieces of parchment, a book board, ill. 75) and toys (balls, spinning tops (ill. 76), elderwood branches hollowed out, knucklebones, marbles, dice, gaming pieces, a buzzer) were excavated here. Twelve soles of shoes measured between 18 and 20 cms, in the same range of sizes as the Groningen schoolboys' shoes. Between these school finds, also the top of a paddle made of birchwood could be recognized

²³ See: Knappert 1905: 14-15.

²⁴ Van Genabeek 2005; see the website of the excavation, updated regularly: <http://home.planet.nl/~veen0266> (September 2007).

²⁵ Van Genabeek 2005: 23 and 26.

(see ill. 75). The top measures 4.4 x 5.3 cms and is 0.9 cms thick, the handle with diameter 1.3 cm was broken off after 5.5 cms length. Furthermore, a bundle of twigs tied together was recovered from the site, measuring 13 x 2.5 cms; this most likely was a rod, but may still have been a small brush. A fair number of counters



ill. 75. Finds, including a paddle, from the Gorinchem Grammar school, site no. 39/67.
© Author.

ill. 76. Toys from the Gorinchem Grammar school, site no. 39/67.
© Author.



26 All finds come from the layer labelled 39/67; the objects still lacked individual numbering in February 2005.

glazed windows, making it easy to heat. The excavated plan (see ill. 74) indicates that from this building the Gorinchem schoolboys could walk into an open schoolyard, surrounded by a gallery that would give shade and shelter when needed.

3.4 Zwolle: A boarding house

In 1986, remains of a medieval boarding house for pupils were found in the basement of the local arts school in the city of Zwolle in the eastern part of the Netherlands. In its original form of 1384, the building was designed as the *Domus Parva*, the ‘small house’, to house pupils from outside Zwolle who attended the then famous grammar school of Johannes Cele (known as Celius). The small house was one of three such buildings within a larger complex built by the Brethren of Common Life in Zwolle; one of the other two was the *Domus Pauperum* (house for the poor) that would have given lodging to pupils who could not pay for their stay. In 1500, the *Domus Parva* lost its function, when it was remodelled by the Brothers into a refectory and reading hall.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, up to fifty boys lived together in this boarding house. Although they shared dormitories as a rule, at least some of the elder ones had a small room of their own. This is indicated by the writings of the theologian Wessel Gansfort, who enjoyed this luxury when he attended the school of Cele between 1432 and 1449.²⁷ The complex of buildings, including the boarding houses, the school itself and the home of the head master (the later gate of which is still preserved), located within the heart of the city next to the main church, must have given an impression somewhat like that offered by present-day boarding schools like Eton College in England. Also in Zwolle, the schooling complex must have had a prominent place in the city.

The 1986 excavations, carried out by a local group of voluntary archaeologists under supervision of the municipal archaeologist of Zwolle, Hemmy Clevis, revealed



ill. 77. *Slates and slate pencils found in the Domus Parva in Zwolle.*
© Author.

ill. 78. *Three pisspots excavated in the Domus Parva in Zwolle.*
© Hemmy Clevis.

ill. 79. *Shaving knife excavated in the Domus Parva in Zwolle.*
© Hemmy Clevis.

²⁷ Van Rhijn 1917: 36, also cited in Clevis s.a.: 23.

daily life in the boarding house in detail.²⁸ Only some of the finds related to the learning practice: slates with doodles and slate pencils (ill. 77), a writing peg and a pewter inkwell. Most of the finds give a more general impression of living in a boarding house: in addition to a remarkably large number of pisspots (ill. 78), there were storage jugs and cooking pots, window glass and floor tiles, dress accessories and doorkeys, shoes, beakers, cutlery and even a shaving knife (ill. 79) that indicates the age group attending the grammar school.²⁹

The botanical remains and samples gave detailed clues regarding the daily menu of the schoolboys, which must have featured a lot of – undoubtedly nutritious, but rather dull sounding – bread porridge, but included beef, pork, game and various fruits too. Moreover, the food must have been nicely spiced, according to the many seeds of all kinds of kitchen herbs discovered in the samples. Most of the animal bones could be determined as food remains, except for the full skeletons of eight cats, two dogs and a polecat, that all died violently by a smack on the head. These bones show that a cat-slapper must have been active around the boys' house.

The large number of 13 pisspots can be explained using the 1555 regulations of the Bruges' city school (the *Bogardenschool*, for a detailed discussion of these rules see Chapter 7) as a textual parallel. The rules mention at the beginning of the month of October that three or four pisspots should be placed in each row of the dormitory for the up-coming winter time, to make sure that the pupils did not have to walk too far in their undershirts in the cold when they had to pee at night.³⁰ This text is also an indication that in the sixteenth century dormitories were still the usual sleeping situation in boarding schools.

3.5 A European perspective

Liège: The oldest

The oldest school find of which I am aware was excavated in Saint-Lambert Square in Liège (in the east of present-day Belgium) and is dated to the thirteenth/fourteenth century. Large-scale excavations in the 1980s and 1990s underneath this square in the middle of the old city of Liège, where the cathedral of Liège stood until it was destroyed during the French Revolution, revealed a large complex of buildings, including different phases of the cathedral, its surrounding structures, and the houses alongside the market beside the church.³¹

The main entrance to this cathedral was on the northern side, from the old market (still called 'Vieux Marché'). To the right of this entrance, steps led to a corridor, the northern gallery of the eastern cloister. From there, a small room – flanked by two even smaller spaces – gave access to two small annexes, that housed the school. This is indicated by the finds from the site, that include writing implements and toys. That indication is strengthened by a very probable continuity of function: in the eighteenth century, the free school of St. Lambert was still at this spot.³² In comparison with other schools, the exact location is a further argument in favour of this interpretation. The school was part of the cathedral complex, but not inside the church itself, and it was directly accessible from the cloister – the pupils could run into the cloister in between lessons.

For the early phase of this school, the only dating evidence is a large wall running clearly above and into the foundations, that can be dated to 1370. This presents the underlying structure of the school with a *terminus ante quem*: it must have been

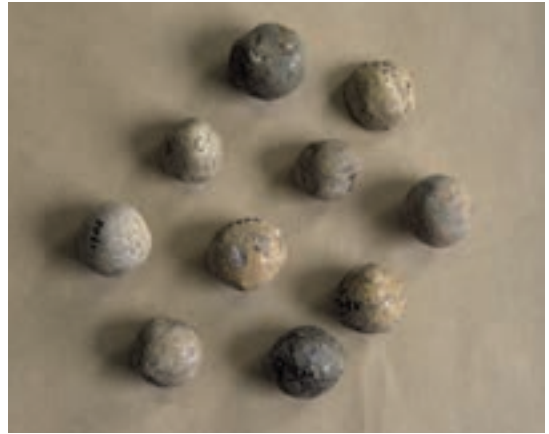
28 Assink et al 1987.

29 Clevis s.a.: 23-28.

30 Schouteet 1960.

31 Otte 1982-.

32 Maps from around 1790 show the situation of the cathedral before its demolition, with the room between the northern tower and the 'chapelle du jubilé' indicated as 'écolatrie' or 'classes gratuits de Saint-Lambert.' See: Otte 1988: 14.



built before that date, but how long before is not certain. The finds include datable ceramics from the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and some coins from the decades before and after 1400. Two (and a half) Papal seals (*bullae*) of Pope John XXII must have been attached to documents issued between 1316 and 1334, the dates of his papacy; but it is unknown if these documents had anything to do with education.³³ We can conclude that the school was built before 1370, maybe even a century before, and still in use a century after.

From this site, at least nine styluses can be identified, seven in bronze and two in bone (see ill. 26). One of the bone writing pegs has a bronze cuff around the base for grip, which is unusual but very handy (see § 2.3). Among the other metal finds, there are five further sharp points most likely of styluses – but less certainly identifiable than the broad top ends – and a sharp bone pricker that may also have been (part of) a writing implement. A Roman stylus was found here too, while other Roman finds are lacking: maybe this old stylus was reused in a medieval context. Apart from writing in wax, these sharp writing implements may have been used on at least six fragments of slates, partly still holding doodles and sketches, preserved from this site. Most recognizable is a sketched *Agnus Dei*, but it is not a masterpiece.

Play is indicated most vibrantly by a buzzer (ill. 80). This 3-mm-thick bronze disc, with a diameter of 2.8 cms, has carefully milled edges, two holes in the middle, and was made somewhat rounded on purpose. It was held between two hands, suspended on a double horizontal thread. When turned over many times, and consequently kept turning by moving the hands to and fro, the buzzer made a loud buzzing noise. These objects are not musical instruments, but were used more or less as toys – in the twentieth century, as a child my mother made one herself, using a simple button and a thread of wool. Small discs with holes, made of bone and slate, were found in the cesspit of the Groningen Grammar School and were most likely homemade buzzers,³⁴ unlike the more purpose-made metal ones.

Other playthings found here are glazed ceramic marbles: a group of nine and a half (ill. 81), a group of eight and a half, and two found together, the latter of white clay with a bright yellow glaze known from so-called Andenne ceramics, produced in the region of the same name, in the Meuse valley not too far from Liège, from the eleventh to the fourteenth century. From this type of ceramics, rattles were often

ill. 80. *Stylus and buzzer excavated in the school of Liège, before c.1370. Liège, Archaeological Service of Wallony, inv.nos. F1 2572. © Author.*

ill. 81. *Marbles excavated in the school of Liège. Liège, Archaeological Service of Wallony, inv.no. 1702. © Author.*

33 In addition to the finds published, I was able to see all the material from the site myself, at the Archaeological Service of Wallony at Liège, in June 2006. Many thanks for this go to the staff of the Service and especially to Nancy Verstraelen.

34 See: Willemsen 1998: 172.

made³⁵ – two of the shards from the same pit may have belonged to such a rattle – so it is not surprising that other toys came out of these ovens as well. Three small bone dice were recovered, one from the same find spot as two styluses, the buzzer and the two marbles. With a maximum size of 7 mms, it is small indeed; the eyes are in the paired system, which means that the opposite sides do not show 1-6, 2-5 and 3-4, but 1-2, 3-4 and 5-6. That same location also yielded some personal belongings: two broken beads, one certainly from a rosary, a piece of a St. James' shell, a button, metal dress accessories and a small key.

Aspects of the building are reflected in the assemblage by window glass and a number of small flags. The flags are glazed tiles measuring nearly 5 x 5 cms and less than 1.5 cms thick;³⁶ they must originally have been laid in some sort of (chequered) pattern of yellow and brown squares (see ill. 239). It is interesting to compare these finds with the early-sixteenth-century depiction of what is meant to be a school in Liège. The stained-glass window of 1527 with the life of Saint Lambert in the collegiate church of St. Martin in Liège shows a school scene, where the small saint reads with his teacher (see § 4.3). The building in which this Liège-based teaching is situated, under a barrel vault, has glazed windows and a tiled floor as well. Moreover, window glass and coloured floor tiles are a common find from later school sites (see § 3.3).

Lübeck: The most extensive

Close in date to the Liège school is the drainage find from Lübeck in Northern Germany, discovered in 1866 in the 'Kloake' (main city sewer) on the site of the former city school near the 'Sankt-Jakobikirche' (church of St. James).³⁷ This municipal school, where the sons of merchants, in particular, were educated, had been founded in 1262, in spite of much resistance by the clergy, who had long been managing a cathedral school in the city.³⁸ The school equipment found here dates back to c.1370 and includes wax tablets, a wax notebook, three inkwells (two in limestone, one in horn), a maplewood writing peg, seven penknives with traces of ink, a counting caster, and two paddles, the punishing instruments of teachers. Also in this case the material culture of both pupils and teachers is present (ill. 82). Some additional finds were seen in the original publication as standing in no or only a loose connection with the school: two wooden plates and a wooden spoon, a lead ornamental disc and a bronze seal, a wooden shoelast, and two pattens. In comparison with the other assemblages, these do not seem so out of place.

Among these school finds there is a strikingly large number of writing tablets (54), of which the medieval texts could still be deciphered thanks to thin wax layers that allowed scratches into the wood itself. Series of calligraphy characters, Latin grammar exercises, and scrawls and doodles made by the schoolboys in between, give a vivid impression of the daily classroom practice of pupils writing down their lessons. They also date the find; the drain had been in use since c.1340, but three letters on the wax tablets seem to have originated very close to the year 1370. The two paddles are 52.4 and 45.2 cms long, hold traces of paint, and one is marked on the disc; these paddles are the oldest preserved examples as known to date.³⁹

This 'Altfund' was completed by rescue excavations in 1979 and 1981/1982 on the site Jacobikirchhof 2-4, where another assemblage of finds would be recovered from the sewer of the same school. This time, 46 writing pegs and a wetstone were found;

35 See: Willemsen 1998: 97 & 182-285 and Oost 1980.

36 One yellow from pit 7512: 47 x 47 x 14 mms, one brown from pit 6666: 48 x 52 x 13 mms, many fragments (yellow and brown) from pit 6658, with roughly the same measurements.

37 Warncke 1912, see also the picture in: Kühnel 1984: 172.

38 Krüger 2002: 83.

39 Krüger 2002: 133.



ill. 82. *Old photo showing assembly of finds, including paddle, from St. Jakob's school in Lübeck, c.1370. Photo taken from: Leven te Leuven 1998: 366.*

of these, 44 styluses (3 in brass, 11 in iron and 30 in bone) form one coherent find from a fifteenth-century waste layer. Although both the nineteenth-century find and the twentieth-century excavations refer to the same school, a direct connection between the two assemblages – and thus between wax tablets and writing pegs – cannot be proved. It should be underlined that a direct connection seems logical and is merely contradicted by the different dates: the fifteenth-century styluses can be dated from their archaeological context, while the wax tablets seem to be a century older, when the texts on them are considered. As all objects come from the same site, it can be concluded that both school and sewer were used for a longer period.⁴⁰

In Lübeck in the fourteenth century, as in Holland in the sixteenth, there was time for play at school. This is suggested by three gaming pieces (two bone, one maplewood) in the 'Altfund', interpreted as destined for the game of checkers,⁴¹ but much more generally used. Other finds correspond notably with those from school excavations mentioned earlier: in Lübeck wooden plates, a wooden spoon, a child's shoe and short knives could be recognized too. A pattern of finds typically for school sites starts to emerge: writing equipment, things for eating your breakfast and lunch, toys, and incidentally teacher's attributes like a paddle.

3.6 Some other schools and houses

There are some more isolated finds from school buildings, that give a more fragmented and therefore usually less specific idea of school life. This is the case at Merton College in Oxford, originally from the thirteenth century, where excavations in 2002 on the site of the college stables revealed some 'learning' items, like bone styluses and a pair of 'book tweezers'. In the later Middle Ages the latrines of the all-boys' school had been situated here, and it is known that college fellows taught grammar to boys from outside the college as well. Still, the items are too few and too general to be allocated properly to the school. Revealing a history of writing inside the college, they have been put on display inside the college library, late-medieval in itself as well.⁴²

40 Krüger 2002: 151; in this publication the Lübeck finds are on p. 150-154 (styluses), 169-178 (wax tablets), 233 (wetstone, knives, paddles).

41 Krüger 2002: 142 suggests that the wooden pieces were used for counting; that is a possibility, but there are no specific indications for this, and the suggestion seems to have been prompted by unfamiliarity with toys in school contexts.

42 The items seem to be unpublished, apart from a picture of the stylus in the leaflet *Merton College Excavations 2002*; extra information was generously delivered orally to me by librarian Julia Walworth in the spring of 2005.

A small find assemblage is known from the excavations at the Margaretenplatz in Krefeld/Linn, where two styluses (one in bone, one in bronze) and a book clasp have been recovered. The bronze stylus was found in a school, in a trench beneath a built-in fifteenth-century stove; the bone stylus comes from the same school, the bronze book clasp from the adjacent church, but close to the school.⁴³

A fourteenth-century wooden writing tablet with a handle has been excavated from the churchyard of the Cathedral of St. John in Bois-le-Duc (ill. 83). It comes from a brickwork cesspit dated before 1419, with the stratigraphical context suggesting a date in the second half of the fourteenth century. The rectangular tablet is made of oak and quite large, originally measuring ca 17 x 10.5 cms, 1 cm thick. It has a trapezoidal handle measuring 6.1 x 5.2 cms with a hole (diameter 0.5 cms) in it. There are scratches on the surface, but nothing legible. This find can be linked to the choir school of the cathedral. It is known from written sources that this school was located on the site at the Janskerkhof where the excavation was carried out.⁴⁴ This type of tablet, large and with a trapezoidal handle, is also the type depicted in school scenes most often (see Chapter 4) and seems to be well suited, especially for a beginner.

Three 'plakken' or paddles were found in a cesspit of the Brinkmann-site in Haarlem, to be dated to the fifteenth century (see ill. 61). The cesspit where the 'plakken' were found belonged to a house at the Smedenstraat, straight across the road from the Noorder Schoolsteeg (Northern School Alley) and the Zuider Schoolsteeg (Southern School Alley), that mark the site where the 'groote scole' (main school) was situated. This was the school given by Duke Albrecht to the city of Haarlem in 1389; the alleys are called 'scoelstege' (school alley) at least from the early fifteenth century.⁴⁵ It is likely that the 'plakken' were used at this school and ended up in the cesspit of a house on the Smedenstraat that belonged to someone working at the school.⁴⁶

Another paddle was found in Oldenzaal, in a well belonging to the house of one of the vicars of the former Latin school there from the period 1525-1580 (see ill. 11). As in Haarlem, this is a logical archaeological context for a 'plak', as it is usually either thrown away not too far from a place of education, or else its former owner used to be a teacher. The paddle in the museum of Ribe (Denmark) cannot be linked to a school.⁴⁷

In Rostock (north-eastern Germany), four cesspits belonging to the 'pädagogium Porta Coeli' dated to the first half of the sixteenth century, were excavated in 1997.⁴⁸ The 'pädagogium' belonged to the University of Rostock and housed 'parvuli', students in their first semester at university, and their masters.

ill. 83. *Writing tablet found on the site of the cathedral school of Bois-le-Duc, oak, before 1419. Bois-le-Duc, Archaeology Service, inv.no. i 5592.*

© Author.



43 Krüger 2002: 142; the finds from Krefeld are on p. 150 (styluses) and 199 (book clasp).

44 Bois-le-Duc, Dienst Bouwhistorie en Archeologie, inv.no. i 5592 (DBKJ VII-34-1530), published in: Boekwijt and Janssen 1997: 104; information on the site was kindly supplied by Ronald van Genabeek personally.

45 Kurtz 1965: 134.

46 With thanks to Theo Bottelier of the archaeological working party (AWN) Haarlem.

47 Ribe, Town Museum, inv.no. D01659; thanks to Claus Feuille for this information. See also: Krüger 2002: 133.

48 Burrows and Niemann 1999/2000.

As one could only enter a ‘bursa’ or college like this after being registered as a student, its population was on average older than that of the schools and ‘domus’ dealt with above, although there was some overlap. As Johannes Hadus, a pupil of this house, wrote in a Latin poem: ‘Qui puer hoc venit, vir bene doctus abit’ (Who comes here as a boy, leaves as a man well taught).⁴⁹ The assemblage of objects from the Rostock cesspits is much alike those from ‘secondary’ schools. It includes learning equipment like inkwells, styluses and fragments of books; pieces of clothing and shoes, bags and cases; knives, spoons, combs and pisspots; and playthings like marbles, fragments of skittles and gaming pieces. The advanced age of the inhabitants of this college is pre-eminently betrayed by the absence of the usual children’s toys and teacher’s punishment devices, and by the presence of adult weaponry. Apart from being a parallel for the sites in this chapter, the excavations at Rostock give a glimpse of what an investigation of student life, based on material culture, might have in store.

3.7 Reformation schools

Coventry: A monastery reused

In England, the Free Grammar School of Coventry was housed in reused buildings of the Whitefriars Abbey in the mid-sixteenth century. Here, the Carmelite monastery – called ‘white friars’ because of their white cloaks – was closed after the Dissolution, followed by the sale of all the buildings except the church itself, first in 1538 and in succession to John Hales, who founded a school on the terrain in 1545. This school must have functioned for at least ten years, according to coins from 1555 found here. In 1558 the school was transferred to another site, near the Church of St. John the Baptist. Because John Hales fought with the Corporation of Coventry about both schools, quite a lot is known about them. The schoolboys’ seating was transferred from Whitefriars to St. Johns and is still preserved.

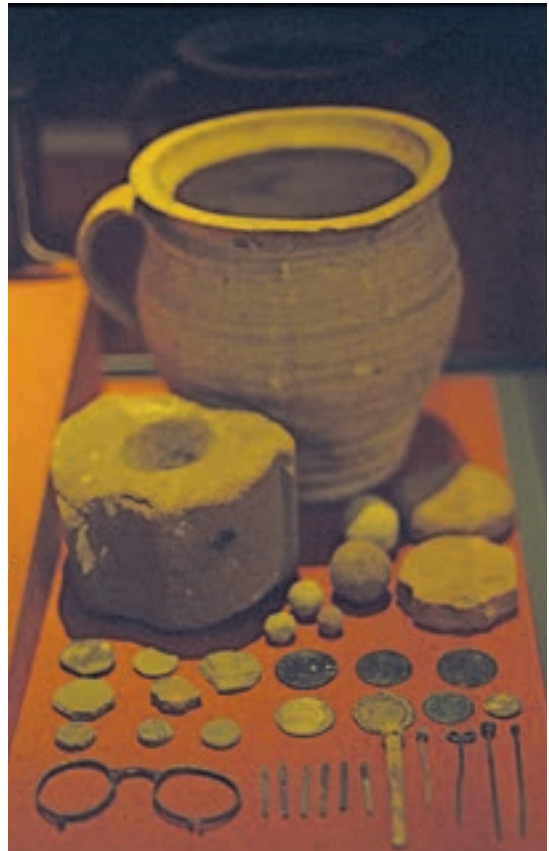
Excavations were carried out on the Whitefriars site in the 1960s and 1970s before the adjacent road was constructed; only the part of the choir that housed the Grammar school survived (ill. 84). A lot of building material was found, showing



ill. 84. *Site of excavations in and near Whitefriars in Coventry. © Author.*

49 Burrows and Niemann 1999/2000: 167.

ill. 85. *Finds from Whitefriars school in Coventry including pisspot, counters and inkwell. Coventry Museum. © Author.*



that the building was in a sorry state when used as a school. Finds of fragments of tiles and painted glass give a hint about the interior of the school.⁵⁰ Most small finds are from the choir zone, especially from the corners, where there had been gaps in the stalls. They revealed objects 'related to archery, shooting, gambling, games and amusement, pilfering, dress, toilet, adornment and sewing, eating and drinking habits, reading and writing, accounting, trade, dentistry and medicine (uroscopy).'⁵¹

Indeed, the 'usual' range of 'typical' school objects is present here. Notable are the writing implements, because in addition to a bone stylus and some book studs, twelve similar inkwells made of re-used bricks were recovered, one bearing the initials HW (ill. 85). Playthings like slate counters, dice and marbles in clay and sandstone were in the company of a jew's harp and blunt arrow heads used for target practice. Necessities for eating and drinking included knives, maybe used as penknives as well, but also glasses, jugs, beakers, and bones left from meals. Furthermore, a full range of personal equipment got lost: all kinds of dress accessories, buckles, a medaillon with the Madonna, a badge showing a gloved hand, small bells, rosary beads, casters and coins. Most of these objects are complete; they must have got lost, although it is tempting to imagine that 'the temptation to post the possessions of other scholars down the inviting cracks in the stall floors must have been irresistible'.⁵²

⁵⁰ *Story of Whitefriars* s.a.: 9.

⁵¹ Woodfield 1981: 81

⁵² Woodfield 1981: 86.



Alpirsbach: An evangelic school

During restoration of the still-standing medieval buildings of the convent of Alpirsbach in the Schwarzwald (Black Forest) in the province of Baden-Württemberg in Southern Germany in 1958, a most remarkable find was made.⁵³ The hollow space above the vaults of the eastern cloister wing turned out to be stuffed with textiles, paper and objects. As the value of this 'hidden layer' was only realized later on, after the discovery the workmen roughly pulled the stuff out from under the roof with their hoes, destroying all that might have been left of its original position and lay-out. The whole assemblage was dumped in the cloister and searched for what seemed important at the time (ill. 86). A lot was lost in the process. Even so, the objects seem to have been put there in a random way, and it is not known why. More of these kinds of partition layers or 'concealed finds' have been discovered, between ceilings or under roofs of medieval and early-modern buildings, and those too consist mainly of paper, textiles, leather and wood.⁵⁴ There are many explanations possible – concealed, apotropaic? – but most likely it was filling that functioned as some sort of insulation.

The filling of the pendentives of the vaults at Alpirsbach consisted of objects and papers from the building's rich history, mostly dating from the late fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries, with an important role for 'waste' from the school that was located in the convent between 1556 and 1595. But mixed into this filling were objects from later centuries, so shoes from the seventeenth century and playing cards from the twentieth were discovered as well. Because of the way the layer was 'extracted', it is now unsure if these later objects were put up there separately, or that the stuff was already collected from different places when it was put away.

ill. 86. *Assembled finds from the concealed find in Alpirsbach, shortly after discovery in 1958. Photo taken from: Mönche und Scholaren 1995: 9.*

⁵³ I thank Michiel van Groesen for calling my attention to the finds exhibited permanently in the convent.

⁵⁴ Ericsson and Atzbach 2005.

An evangelic monastic school was installed in this building in 1556, as part of the decision made in the duchy of Württemberg that year to entrust the 13 Catholic convents with the education of future evangelistic theologians. This was financed from the revenues of the former cloister properties. Alpirsbach was one of the lower schools, usually housing around 14 boys in the age group ten to 14. After two or three years, they would move on to a higher convent school, before going to the University of Tübingen for their *Studium*. The whole educational scheme had been optimistic and in 1583/1584 three monastic schools were closed again. The second wave of closures in 1595 also put an end to the school at Alpirsbach. Thus this school, of which so many objects were discovered, functioned for only about 40 years.

The school system was rooted firmly in the church and state of Württemberg and the *Großen Württembergischen Kirchenordnung* (major church regulations of Württemberg) of 1559 devotes a full chapter to the theoretical and practical construction of the schools. This *Ordnung der Klosterschulen* (monastic school regulations) records details on the pedagogical aims and curriculum, but also on punishment, food and drink and clothing of the pupils. Although the curriculum was aimed completely at preparing clergyman, it was rooted clearly in the grammar school tradition, with most classes devoted to Latin grammar and literature and time for dialectic and rhetoric, while singing, music, Greek and religion were included in the subject matter too. The new version of the *Klosterschulordnung* of 1582 records a blueprint for the hour plan of a lower cloister school. Taking into account also the cloister times for prayer or rather 'attention' (*Andacht*) and regular meals we can construct the following day-to-day schedule for a schoolboy at Alpirsbach:

Hour	Monday	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Saturday	Sunday
4 (winter 5)	Morning attention						
6-7	Reading Latin						Morning preaching
8-9	Latin Grammar					Sunday gospels	
9-10	Choir attention and religious education						
10-11	Lunch meal						
	Musical practice						
12-13	Week tasks	Reading Latin				Biblical history	Catechism
13-14	Dialectic, rhetoric				Free	Dialectic/rhetoric	Psalm explanation
14	Afternoon meal (Unterbrod)						
15-16	Greek Grammar and reading			Free	Greek	Free	House tasks
16	Vespers (listening)						
17	Evening meal						
21	Night attention						

Fig. III. Curriculum in Schulordnung 1582 combined with hours of Andacht in the convent.



ill. 87. *Names of pupils inscribed on the walls of the Alpirsbach monastery. Photo taken from: Mönche und Scholaren 1995: 47.*

Among the finds under the roof of the Alpirsbach monastery were many papers of the school period, including many remnants of manuscripts and printed books in a relatively good condition. The fragments of printed books show that for instance the *Quaestiones Grammaticae* of Melanchthon was used, while the manuscript fragments show the translating of an *Argumentum* (one a week usually) and the collecting of phrases from classical authors into a manuscript notebook. Apart from these schoolbooks, drafts of letters by the schoolboys were also found, some to their parents, some to the abbot or the teachers about situations in the convent school. Some drawings provide us with very personal impressions of life at the cloister school, left by the pupils themselves. There are caricatures of teachers and pupils and drawings showing men dressed in sixteenth-century clothes in various activities. A very domestic scene is a dinner table seen from above, with around it seven heads looking up and provided with names (see ill. 250). On the table, a large dish with food can be seen in the middle, while the heads have rectangular plates, knives and glass beakers before them on the table. It is hard not to think of dice or gaming pieces as identified by the fourteen small circles in the lower-right corner. In this case, one of the pupils must have sketched the actual situation of a cloister school meal; it is known from the message that the 14 schoolboys were divided over two tables for dinner.

The pupils also left their names and marks as inscriptions in the dormitory, on the east side of the cloister (ill. 87). They could be read, some only with the help of ultraviolet light. Although many are just initials that cannot be interpreted, the inscriptions left us a whole list of pupils' names, some in combination with a place of origin, a year, a drawing or a poem. It seems to have been popular to immortalize friendship by leaving two names together with a motto and a date. For instance, in cell 107, Michael Wagner 'Nirtingensis' and Iacobus Schopf 'Stuttgardia' left their names in 1567 with a Latin poem:

'Qvid v[ale]t hic Mundus Quid Gloria q[ui]due triumphus /
Post mis[er]um funus pulvis et Umbra sum[us] /
Omnibus rebus iam peractis /
Nulla fides est in pactis /
Mel in ore: verba lactis /
Fel in corde: f[r]a[us] in fa[ct]is /⁵⁵

(What is this World worth, what Honour and what Triumph? after miserable Death we are only dust and shadow. When all things have been done, there is no faith in pacts. [Although there is] honey in the mouth, words inside, there is bile in the heart, and fraud in the facts).

⁵⁵ *Mönche und Scholaren* 1995: 47.

While more vanitas-themed poems can be found, some friends chose lines more appropriate for study mates, like Ioannes Abelinus and Leonhardus Molitor ‘Winnendensis’ in 1580:

‘Surge puer, vigila, canta, lege, disce vel ora. /
Sic fac ut nulla sine fructu transeat hora. /
Sic fit hora brevis et labor ipse levis. /’⁵⁶

(Rise, boy, pay attention, sing, read, learn or pray. Act so that not an hour goes by without result. This makes the hour short and the work itself light.)

School clothes

Thanks to a message of 1567 written by the supervisor of the Alpirsbach cloister, we know in great detail the arrangements for clothing and shodding of the schoolboys:

‘Erstlich sovil di Klaidungen belanngt, werden sie die Schuoler, deren jeder zeit vierzehen, jars zwaimahl, zum ersten umb Georij mit zwilchin hosen uund wammes, hernach uff den herbst von gemainem wullin unlendischen schwartzen tuoch, da man biss anhehr 30 oder 31 eln umb neun Gulden erkhaufft, zu rockh unnd hosen unnd mit schwartz barchetten wammessern von newem geclaidet, allss das in de jars erstgesaszter massen ain schuoler rockh, in der Lengin unngewahr ain fierndel unnder die kneuten mit langen Ermmel.

Ain zwülchen unnd wullin par hossen, glatt one ybergesäss, ain zwülchin unnd barchetten wamis mit leinem Tuoch gefüettert. Item verrers gipt man iren jedem alle jar zwai neuwer gedoppelter par hoch schuoch unnd uff den herbst, wann sie ire newe herbst klaidier empfahen, jedem ein news schwartz spannisch hüettlin.

Darzu werden inen ire klaidier vom Schneider fast allweg inn süben oder acht wochen einmal, unnd die schuoch, so oft nottwenndig, ins closters costen unnd underhaltung geflickht unnd gebessert, wie solches alles inn closter rechnung zu fündten unnd zu sehen’.⁵⁷

(First, as far as clothing is considered, you must [give] the pupils, fourteen each time, twice a year, first at Gregory’s Day (23 April) linen trousers and jerkin, after that in autumn mixed-fabric black textile from Sulz am Neckar, bought 30 or 31 yds for nine guilders, for cloak and trousers and with black mixed-fabric jerkin clothed anew, and when in his first year a cloak for the pupil that reaches about a quarter under the knee, with a long hood.

And a pair of socks in linen and wool, soft without upper part, and a linen and mixed-fabric jerkin lined with linen cloth. Further on give them each every year two new pairs of ankle-high shoes with double soles, and in autumn, when they get their new autumn clothes, each a new Spanish hat. In addition, by a tailor [let] their clothes once every seven or eight weeks, and their shoes as often as necessary, at the expense and effort of the convent, be repaired and improved, all of this to be found and seen in the accounts of the cloister).

The last remark shows that this was practice, not theory, and that supposition is confirmed by the clothes and shoes found in the ‘partition layer’. There are three very similar shirts dating from the second half of the sixteenth century, all of the same cut, based on rectangular rolls of uncoloured linen, with the sleeves and low-standing collar attached. A separate linen collar with gathers and needlework decoration was preserved too. The shirts are of roughly the same size, 83-100 cms long and 50-58 cms wide, with an armlength of 32-44 cm attached; the collars measure 29-35 cms in diameter. Comparison with men’s shirts of the same period show that those are at least 50 cms longer and also wider at the collar, so those found here must have been schoolboys’ shirts (ill. 88).

⁵⁶ *Mönche und Scholaren* 1995: 48.

⁵⁷ *Mönche und Scholaren* 1995: 40.



ill. 88. *Shirt from the Alpirsbach find. Photo taken from: Mönche und Scholaren 1995: 49.*

All three shirts were washed and clean when discarded – no traces of grease at collars or armpits – but they show some tearing in the chest area, sleeves torn, and one has a blood stain on the back. They were all shifted to the left, indicating that they were taken off hastily, and the bundle was tied together with a loose sleeve. After intensive study of the find, Ilse Fingerlin has suggested that the shirts were the remnants and indication of a serious fight between three of the schoolboys, and were pulled off, collected and put away under the roof on purpose. It is known that fighting was punished severely in schools, and it may have seemed a good idea to get rid of the evidence. This ‘Versteckfund’ (hidden find) also shows that the intermediate layer was a spot known as suited for putting away things that one wished to hide from discovery.⁵⁸

In the message, there is repetitive mentioning of jerkins. Luckily, also one of those was in the find (see ill. 244). It has a standing collar, long arms and is narrowed at the waist, where a triple skirt was added. There is a large patch at the front, indicating that the jerkin was worn for a long time, and confirming the mention of clothing repaired by the convent’s tailor. Much of the jerkin is missing: of the sleeves only the lining remains and only the buttonholes indicate the buttoning. There are holes on the inside at waist height, where the trousers would be fastened to the jerkin. Like the shirts, the measurements of the jerkin (height from shoulder to waist only 31 cms, waist girth 88 cms) show it was worn by a child or youngster; this piece too must have belonged to a pupil of the school.

Of the legwear mentioned, a knee-high stocking (ill. 89), an ankle-high sock and a shoe-high ‘footwarmer’ were recovered, all of children’s size. The two socks seem to have been made out of taller stockings.⁵⁹ An impressive pair of trousers found in the layer is of a bigger size than the shirts and the jerkin, and of a type that was worn pre-eminently by servants, soldiers and labourers; it is worn to a thread at the front upper leg parts, indicating that it would have been worn by somebody doing heavy work in the cloister. Like the jerkin, the trousers are so worn out that they must be regarded as waste. A suggestion made by the curators installing the

58 Fingerlin 1997; Fingerlin in Ericsson and Atzbach 2005: 16.

59 Fingerlin 1997: 116–117.

ill. 89. Stocking from the Alpirsbach find. Photo taken from: Fingerlin 1997: 116.



ill. 90. Slippers from the Alpirsbach find. Photo taken from: Mönche und Scholaren 1995: 55.



ill. 91. Game board on wooden plate from the Alpirsbach find. Photo taken from: Mönche und Scholaren 1995: 61.

finds is that used textiles, like used paper itself, could be re-used in the production of paper – maybe the objects concealed under the roof were collected for that purpose originally.

17 leather shoes in the Alpirsbach find can be dated to the period of either the monastery and/or the evangelistic school, most of them just one of an original pair. The main part of the shoes, some of them made into sandals, are of a date too early to have belonged to the pupils; they would have been worn by the monks or other adults in the cloister. The various models of slippers, however, that were worn from the 1550s onwards may well have been the pupils'. There were four of these close-fitting, untied step-in shoes in the assemblage (ill. 90), all made of leather, one with a double sole; they can be dated to the second half of the sixteenth century. Their measurements, 21.5 to 23.5 cms long – compared with, for instance, fifteenth-century ankle-boots of 26-27.5 cms length – supports the interpretation of the slippers as part of the schoolboys' outfit.⁶⁰

Apart from the clothes and shoes, a simple, uncoloured linen bag was in the assemblage. It is basically rectangular, wider than high (37 x 28 cms) with a 4-cms-broad cuff and seams on all sides. From contemporary depictions this bag could be identified as a 'school sack' (see § 2.5 and ill. 57) – as far as I know the only school sack that has come down to us. The sack depicted could be closed at the top by pulling straps through the double seam. A linen sack in Nuremberg shows another method for closing and carrying it, with small wooden bars with holes in both ends put horizontally through the cuff. Through corresponding holes in the sack carrying straps were fastened to both bag and bars. The four holes in the Alpirsbach bag show that such a system may have been in use for this school sack too.⁶¹

When the whole assemblage is considered, the finds of clothing and shoes both support and enlarge the impression given by the regulations and arrangements

⁶⁰ Mönche und Scholaren 1995: 53-56.

⁶¹ Fingerlin 1997: 118-119.

known from written sources. When one of the paper fragments found in Alpirsbach, a simple ink drawing showing a boy in a knee-length cloak with a broad, pointed collar is considered (see ill. 262), it immediately brings to mind the cloak mentioned in the 1567 message, which every pupil received upon arrival at the school. On this piece of paper, one of the pupils who wore the linen garments is looking back at us.⁶²

Technically, the Alpirsbach monastic school was not 'excavated', but the discovery, analysis and interpretation of such an intermediate layer might be considered a dry archaeological investigation. The objects found are comparable with those from 'real' excavations (ill. 91), but they are much better preserved, with a relatively large share of the finds made from very delicate, perishable material like textiles and paper. The material culture of this school was no different from that of other schools, but thanks to the special circumstances of this find, we were granted a more complete insight into the range of objects used by the pupils. More than anything, the Alpirsbach find shows how transitory material school culture was.

62 *Mönche und Scholaren* 1995: 45.

SCHOOL LIFE DEPICTED

Reading school images

There is a wide range of images in which teachers, lessons, pupils and schools have been depicted, covering all disciplines of medieval and Renaissance art. Most of these must be characterized as eloquent images, intended to tell a lot, but are not easily understood by a modern viewer. That these images and the programmes in which they occur might need some explanation now, however, does not mean that they were not understood in their own times, or could function only in intellectually elite circles then. We sometimes forget that the people who dealt with complex texts must indeed have dealt with complex images comfortably. Reading images was part of instruction as well, both on a personal level, for instance, using manuscripts, and on a public level, for instance, with art in the public sphere such as sculpture in the open air or wall paintings in churches.

None of the iconographic themes, chosen here because they hold the images of school, was exclusive to the private sphere. Any of the themes discussed in this chapter and the two following must have been understood by quite a large audience, even if the best-preserved examples might be in costly manuscripts. Images like the highly complex series of the ages of man tied to the planets (in § 5.1), as preserved in a beautiful book seen by only a few privileged eyes, were copied into a compendium presumably used for distributing knowledge and onto the walls of a church where generations of visitors could see them. Therefore, we should not underestimate the public who used these images and their ability to rate them at their true value. Perhaps we should even consider the possibility that we modern viewers might not be able to read them as well as their contemporary audience.¹

Both the way these images present schools, pupils and teachers, and the details of their execution, testify to the ideas that patrons, artists, and viewers in a certain time and place had about education, the shapes it usually came in, and what objects were used in connection with it. In Chapters 4 to 6 the 'school themes', almost never tied to a specific region, century or art form, are dealt with merely for their own merits. But in the other chapters, the works of art presented here were used as sources for the reconstruction of the material culture of school life. To be able to use images as sources, we have to be able to assess them, and therefore we first have to understand what we are looking at and why it is there. Needless to say, these artworks are not factual documents and cannot be used as if they were old school photographs – that, incidentally, show schoolchildren behaving and looking better than ever in class – but nevertheless they are mirrors of the society that produced and used them, and in that way can be used to extract the common denominators of the image people had of lessons and those educated.

¹ Here I draw upon an original idea of Brian V. Street, as he presented it at ISCHE 28 in Umeå, Sweden in August 2006; the term 'eloquent images' is also his.



4.1 School Parodies

Ape schools

In many of the marginalia in early manuscripts showing scenes of teaching, the school is not populated with children or novices, but with animals, mostly apes, under surveillance of a teacher who is usually also an ape. These parodying scenes are most important for they show more clearly than the ‘human’ school scenes what exactly was necessary to make clear that a group of individuals was a school, and a person a teacher.

A very small book of hours for Maastricht use, made around 1300 in the Meuse region (probably in Liège), shows such an ape school in the two scenes in the lower margin of one page (ill. 92)² – it is one of the oldest depictions of a school in the Netherlands. To the left is a teacher-ape, in a hooded, sleeveless cloak, who is giving an ape pupil a good beating on its bare back with a birching rod. Behind them sits a dressed ape drinking from a urine glass. To the right, a second teacher sits with his hands raised in front of a group of three apes. They are sitting on what seems to be a tiled floor, all of them naked, and the one in the front holds an open book. This parody is one of the earliest examples of an ape school and one of the most obvious at the same time. Already from this single image, it is clear how just a few attributes added to the apes make them pupils and a teacher: apart from the attitudes, just a cloak, a birching rod and a book are necessary to identify the characters. An ape school is a well-known theme in the marginal decoration of fourteenth-century

² London, British Library, ms Stowe 17, f 109r.

psalters, in particular. It is not limited to the Southern Netherlands, although it occurs much more frequently in manuscripts produced there than elsewhere.³

Just a few manuscripts have more than one depiction of a school in their programme of marginalia. As the variation in the marginal decoration seems to have been a welcome feature of particularly the manuscripts decorated in Flanders in the early fourteenth century, it would need a very lavishly decorated and large manuscript to encounter scenes twice, slightly varied. Therefore, it is no surprise that one of the only two manuscripts I know of that shows both an ape school and a 'normal' school is a well-known and indeed very large specimen of *Li Romans di boin roi Alixandre* decorated in Bruges by Jehan de Grise between 1338 and 1344.⁴ Due to the format of the manuscript, the scenes in the margins are relatively large (up to 3 cms high) and thus very detailed. Because a school populated by apes and one with normal pupils is shown within the same work, they can be compared (ills. 93 & 94).

Both teachers are seated in high, straight wooden chairs with rungs, and both are holding up a punishment device in their right hand; both teachers hold a wooden paddle – one of the earliest depictions of this instrument – and the ape teacher a birching rod too. Both have a pupil sitting before them, reading to them from a book. The ape pupil is a bit further away and is being hit on his paw by the rod held by the ape teacher in his left front paw. Then there is, in both scenes, a group of pupils sitting on the ground, reading. The two groups of two pupils to the left of both scenes are in very similar positions indeed. The main difference between the scenes is the clothing: the schoolboys are dressed in the fashion of the day, with hoods, bicolour tunics and belt purses, while the teacher has a warm cloth wrapped around his waist. The apes are all naked, including the ape teacher. In spite of that, they can be recognized as being in school from the attributes and postures only. In the ape school the punishment is stressed more, and the second ape from the left seems to be handling his penis: this is a parody. The other manuscript with both an ape school and, in this case, a monastic school, is a Ghent psalter from the beginning of the fourteenth century as well, now in the Royal Library of Copenhagen (Denmark).⁵

Punishment is seen clearly in the ape school depicted on the frontispiece of a French Lancelot-romance dated 1345.⁶ Here, in the right-hand margin sitting on the end of a tendril in the decoration are four apes, none of them clothed. The one on the right, leaning against the frame, is the teacher as he has a large birching rod in his right paw, with which he is hitting the bare bottom of an ape that is kneeling before him, its head in his lap, holding his thighs with its paws. To the left are two more apes, seated with paws crossed, looking back to the teacher, jaws opened, one with an open book in its lap. This depiction of punishment at school follows a fixed iconography also used for human teachers and pupils (see § 4.2) and even without any indication of clothing, building or furniture, the postures and the rod and book are sufficient to make this scene easily identified as a school lesson. The ape school is not the only marginal decoration on this frontispiece: the bottom margin is filled with people playing games, including 'frog in the middle'. Also in the remainder of the manuscript some apes are in margins, usually in dirty poses; in all cases they are naked and their bare bottoms have been highlighted, as in the school scene.

An earlier and more elaborate scene of punishment in a Northern-French manuscript of 1280-1290⁷ (ill. 95) shows an ape-teacher holding a rod hitting an ape-pupil with a book, while on the right a group of five or six apes is forming a

LEFT PAGE:

ill. 92. *Ape school, Book of Hours, Meuse region, c.1300. London, British Library, ms Stowe 17, f 109r.*
© British Library.

NEXT PAGES:

ill. 93. *Ape school in Romance of Alexander, Bruges, 1338-1344. Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms Bodley 264, f 94v.*
© Bodleian Library.

ill. 94. *School in Romance of Alexander, Bruges, 1338-1344. Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms Bodley 264, f 123v.*
© Bodleian Library.

3 For other depictions of ape schools see: Randall 1966: 212, completed with Janson 1952: 168, note 25; the latter mentions an ape school in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, ms lat 95, but that manuscript has no illustrations (checked October 2006) so that must be a mix-up with ms fr 95 in the same library.

4 Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms Bodley 264, f 94v (ape school) and 123v (school); see: *Romance of Alexander* 1933. I would like to thank the Bodleian Library and especially Dr. Bruce Barker-Benfield for allowing me the rare pleasure of seeing the original manuscript, in July 2004.

5 Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek, GKS 3384/8°, studied in August 1996; ape school on f 131v, monk's school on f 132v.

6 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, ms fr 122, f 1r.

7 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, ms fr 95, Sept sages de Rome, f 355r, bottom margin.

Antes fu occis par tel mesaventure
 Requerrant l'animal tout a desfigure
 n'hauec les gerois tant q'li mors dure
 l'ni a si hardi qui du roier ait cure
 ors vint antagonus desles vne couteure
 o lui mil ceualiers viennent grant aleure
 Quant dardelins les oi molt en or gne endure
 a dist tholom cest grant desconfiture
 ne nous amli fuions por ceste gent rature
 olt a mal emploie li rois la morteture
 e nous perons famoz ce sera bien deoiture
 ors poignent les a les andui a desmesure
 tant chascun son poing par mi l'enheudure
 us fiert chascun le sien tres pui l'infature
 es ceuans les abrent andui a terre dure
 andins fuit tholom queres la sepulture
 a par ceus nauves mes doloz ne malmeture
 aillis loz est loz dieu ou auoient loz cure
 es ames en ont ia en infer pris mesure

Cele point dunt antagonus le ber
 plus de mal en ont fuit couaer e enier
 Ensamble o euls i poignent trestuit li xij per
 Tant fort les enquiarent quil les font reuer
 Delli qu'estandart nu por nus arrester
 e poes grans merueilles oir e escouter
 ams delli grant effoz noistes mes parler
 l a peussies veoir e pies e poins voler
 l es ceuans receus par la campagne aler
 Tant ceualiers sus l'orbe cheoir e ennerfer
 Tant ruiestes cops ferir tant ensaigne clamer
 tant doloureux plaint e tant soupir geier
 olt fu pteus l'animal por effoz endurer
 e fuit a lestandart y buisines soner
 si a fuit les homes raliier e ferer
 ne nus des ceualiers ne puisse entener
 ne se il si embar ne puisse retorner

Eignoz alestandart la fu li recouiers
 li chaps fu grins e larges e dextus de pommiers
 l'animal fu molt pteus e de ce costumiers
 uec lui macabeum e sanses e craniens
 e dait ferir filote en lesteu de quartiers
 al reber lui qui bien estoit maniers
 Q'nil est chous a terre entre y toutonmiers
 p us apres le ceual dont il estoit mestiers
 i la rendu son frere qui monta uolemiers



Chantant l'animal fuit chous a terre

Entre y toutonmiers
 fu l'animal cheus
 e li rois alexand
 fust avertis venus
 a fust moer l'animal
 en champ receus

l'es vous apoguant y mille de ses deus
 e ceual li redurent dont il ert abatus
 e cel quel gramaqua fu molt reueus
 i amicus monta si cest aperceus
 brache le ceual des esperons agus
 ait ferir tholom d'olent e irascus
 terre leste mis se ne doilast li sus
 el duel ot l'animal quil en deuant tous mas
 ne e de maltralent est embouchies lesteus
 ile rempit ferir de toutes ses vertus
 tholom fiert lui du branc qui fu molus
 olt fu bien li effoz d'ambes pars manous
 e sanc e de ceruele fu molt grant la pelus
 tant foz ot l'animal quant ne foz remus
 li gerois les fiertent des beaus dachier pous

Acabens esperonne le destrier de castelle
 plus tost le dait ferir que uole arondele
 ne sauberc li fust li pardeus la maine
 a pres li a trenchie e cense e gounele
 le fer e le fust li met desous laumelle
 ue par derriere le dos enparier la lumelle
 e impant le par vertu us labar de la file



U es chz les gens de bades ceureches a maris
 Qui eulent que lor fies cristians fust echis
 A requierent conseil que ou lor soit aidis
 Clarus lor respont outrages a despis
 Dist que ia por lui n'est ses haubers uestis
 Nisi ne fust on mie qui vult monter en pais
 Reis n'est mais aus hons mole seroit tost fahs
 Il est en grant desloz de ses homes hais
 Dicus dist marceus ce ni vout estourne
 Se la banderins est pais par la ceualerie
 Remens i bon conseil se li faisons aye
 Se clarus enuoue moultre li felonnie
 I nen faisons por lui ne por la seignorie
 Andes a uos ius fies a lor compaignie
 Nul venguent chz nous si ne le laissent mie
 Porus iens ou a vallet de perlie
 Qui tost les amena quant la chose eut aye
 Canaan est eures en la tente roye
 Deles lui salphadin qui la teste ot trechie
 A pres vint cileo li peines dauuairie
 Signor ce dist porus ce iustiere mestie
 Cassiel ont failli celle gent sezone
 Que len ont prison en lor tor bataille
 E uel estre eures soit sauer ou folie
 Enmain au mariner p sous laule echurie
 A de la uers la mer a la porte ebozie
 A xxx compaignons soit la proie auellie
 A cccc valhans de boune gent hardie
 Tant onos gadifer a chiaus de sa lignie
 Ne fers de la cite seront vne faillie
 Neus nos enflurons celsuns teste baillie
 D ehy a nostre agur ni aie resme rive
 A donc lor courons sus baniere desplie
 Mes peres clarus refache vne enuaigne
 A la porte faren ou la barre est trechie
 A sera la cite de deus pars sonaie
 A ses velt oquerons en aucune parcie
 Fretes dist canaan ensi le vous otte
 A deus fu la raisons uiree a flanche
 A mens ot i vallet qui nout desarmie
 A es fu de carens qui siet en maisonie
 A uant il a la raison entendue a oye
 A ne li uir vallet seront vne enuaigne
 A soi mesmes dist quelle seroit nonce
 A cassius le viellart a toute sa maufie

Por lamer gadifer est deuenus epi
 Quant li vallet ou que li uir vallet
 Deuisent quel seront embusier en i dol
 Quatre cens homes darmes celsun son son equal
 A pardeuant la porte seront i enual
 A a proie gaeillur a le omun dotal
 Por traire gadifer a betis en campal
 A dautre part raura en selon dardal
 A la porte faren qui siet sus le rimal
 Por sonuer la ville a la gent omunal
 A soi mesmes dist que tout seroit il mal
 A il ne loloit nonchier au neuu magonal
 A aintenant est idius de la tente royal
 A omentent apocha la cite sejonal
 A a dedens est entres par i petite portol
 A toute a cassian qui siet au gouernol
 A uire uolout passer au roi macedonal
 Por conter de clarus a de la gent indal
 A i valles le saui par le pan de cendal
 A li a agel sarour ce lemdusent
 A es enfans clauozin canaan a pocal
 A uir touent demain fure au pont tel aenal
 A re dist li valles ie vous doi bien retrainre
 A mes uir fice clarus le conseil a lachure
 A es fu en maisonie a nous en uolre aue
 A ine doi riens celer qui touet a uo graue
 A enmain au mariner si com li iers edaue
 A i uir fil clarus a tout lor gent baudaue
 A tout auellie la proie a la porte edaue
 A i seront i agur en la foire de darnaue
 Por mener gadifer a deus fies a laue
 A iere dist cassian tout ce ne puz ie gure
 A dautre part le faren voient tel exampaire
 A ne celsuns vorout estre en inde ou en carme
 A la outre uel passer auoec ce maronaue
 A es moi gadifer qui est molt debonaue
 A heand vout les treshaue empereure
 A tout li vout gure andois que ie repaue
Comme li vallet par ou le messager

Rece dist cassian
 au vallet messager
 A outre uel passer
 auoec ce notonier
 A i menrai auoec moi
 mon neuu gadifer



ill. 95. *Ape school*,
Northern-French, 1280-
1290. Paris, National
Library of France,
ms fr 95, f 355r. © BNF.



class, one of them reading in a large white book, another one writing with a stylus into the black wax on a writing tablet with a handle. In this case, both the teacher and some of the pupils wear cloaks. As in the preceding manuscript, the existing framing is used as a base for the school population to sit on; the crossed hind legs of the ape-pupil being chastised hang down over the tendril, and as in the preceding manuscript the remaining decoration includes people playing games, and other apes, even another scene where an ape is being punished.⁸ The iconography of this school scene is similar to the preceding one, but the furnishing of the scene, with a little clothing and the books and tablet, makes it a more detailed school parody, with, for instance, the ape writing presenting a very close parallel to a human being.

Intellectual animals

The ape school, encountered from the end of the thirteenth century, is a specific crystallization of the image of the 'literary ape', that was already a popular marginal decoration in the twelfth century. Apes are the animals most present in margins, forming a fixed parody of nobility and knights, riding and jousting; in the thirteenth century they start to be used as parodies of the intellectual elite as well. This can be observed in a small early-fourteenth century Ghent psalter in Oxford (ms Douce 5-6), in the margins of which the monkey teacher with a paddle and his pupils (on folio 146r) are in the company of many more of their species: a fornicating ape reading to a bishop,

⁸ Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, ms fr 95: games for instance on f 61v (skittles), 261v (dice), 319r (stilts); ape with rod hitting kneeled ape on f 66v.



an ape with a toy cart looking at a knight, an ape in bishop's robes riding a devil, an ape writing on a tablet, and an ape reading facing a tonsured ape hiding a rod behind his back while looking at a man. Even more apes are depicted playing games, just as in the many depictions of playing children in this manuscript. There are also more 'literary scenes': men and women reading, people singing from large music books, a man with a writing tablet and a book bag hanging from his wrist, and many writing – one with penknife and pen finishing the character he is in, another one very detailed with a sheet on a lectern weighted to remain in place (1.5 x 1 cm only!).⁹ Within the context of marginal illustrations like in these Ghent psalters, including both monkeys parodying learned and pious human behaviour and writers and illuminators 'commenting' on their own jobs, a monkey school could not be absent.

The phenomenon of the literary ape has been explained by H.W. Janson in his *Apes and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* because of 'the widely accepted notion of the ape's pseudo-human mentality, which enables him to imitate the outward appearance of piety and learning.' He sees 'the Monkey School, with the ape-teacher (sometimes in monastic garb) reciting from a book or chastising his unruly pupils with the traditional bundle of birch rods' as a 'travesty of the representations of *Grammatica* as a teacher [see Chapter 6] with book and rod instructing a group of youngsters, which may help to explain why it enjoyed such favour among drôlerie designers'.¹⁰

Although ape schools are most common in manuscripts, other animals also can be found in a similar scene. My personal favourite is a hare school (ill. 96) in a famous French manuscript of the *Roman de la Rose*, illuminated around 1450.¹¹ On folio CXIIIv, a large white hare holding a green rod stands before a low red bench, with three smaller hares (dark brown, pale brown and white) sitting before him,

ill. 96. *Hare school in Roman de la Rose, French, mid-fourteenth century. Paris, National Library of France, ms fr 25526, f 113v. © BNF.*

9 Respectively: Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms Douce 5, f 117v, 135r and Douce 6, f 9v, 84v, 115r (apes); Douce 5, f 1v, 127v, 138v, 155r and Douce 6, f 35r, 82v, 94v, 96v, 97v, 117v, 131v, 139v, 159v (games); Douce 5, f 62r, 104r, 179r and Douce 6, f 14r, 45r, 139v (reading); Douce 6, f 38r, 190r (singing); Douce 6, f 168r (with tablet and bag); Douce 6, f 144r (writing), f 61r (finishing character), and f 105v (small writer). On this group of Ghent psalters and the role of games in their decoration see: Willemsen 1998: 207–211 and ill. VIII.

10 Janson 1952: 167–168.

11 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, ms fr 25526.

ill. 97. *Wolf learning the alphabet, c.1200. Relief in Freiburg Cathedral.*
© Author.



one holding a book. Again a simple parody, but postures, bench, rod and book make it a school without a doubt – unlike the scene in the same manuscript on f XLVIIIv, where a crowned ape behind a lectern is speaking to two apes, one with a book, sitting opposite. The crown and the omission of the rod make it problematic to see a monkey school here, and although it might be a parody of King Solomon teaching, it might also be a parody of a king in general declaring something that had to be written down.

Wolves will be wolves

Parodies of teaching and school can also be encountered in other art forms. One of the forerunners is a sculpted capital with a wolf being taught, now in the Münster of Freiburg and dated to around 1200 (ill. 97). The capital is decorated with a frieze of three scenes, showing Samson and the lion on the far right, and two scenes called a ‘wolf’s school’ in the left and middle. On the far left is a teacher in a monk’s outfit, sitting on a stool, easily recognizable as a teacher by the birching rod in his right hand. Before him sits a wolf in a hood, writing the letters ‘ABC’ on the side of the capital with a stylus, but looking back towards a lamb behind him. In the second scene the wolf has grabbed the lamb with his paws and is being beaten by the teacher. The pun, and at the same time the lesson, is clear: you can try to teach a wolf to write, but it will still remain a wolf. This capital can be found to the right of the choir, marking the entrance to St. Nicholas’s chapel. This chapel, dedicated to the patron of schoolchildren and students, may well have been the location of the original cathedral choir school. So possibly the story was well placed.

A comparable but somewhat earlier sculpture is in Parma cathedral. A marble relief dated 1130-1140 shows a wolf in a monk’s habit¹² being taught by an ass dressed in a monk’s habit too. They are seated opposite each other, the wolf-pupil is reading aloud from a tablet with a handle, while the ass-master holds a rod high in his right paw. The satire has been linked with the rivalry between monks and priests, but from the comparison with other parodies, it is clear that those made fun of do not need to be the ‘others’ – no class escaped being parodied, and manuscripts illuminated in monasteries often contain parodies on monks and nuns especially. Medieval people were well capable of making fun of themselves.

¹² Rather this than a ‘monk with a wolf’s head’ as described in Salvini 1969: 317-318 and fig. 59.



On the choir stalls of Manchester Cathedral, one of the so-called ‘supporters’ flanking a misericord shows a parody involving foxes: a fox holding a rod is teaching two smaller foxes in front of him, both holding a book. All three are sitting on their tails.¹³ A fox or wolf acting as a teacher must have been a joke easily understood, especially if his pupil were a dog, a hare, or fowl – anything that usually hunts the fox or serves as his food. It is not always easy to distinguish a teaching fox from a preaching fox, that can also be shown talking to hare or chickens. In this case, the determinator presented earlier (see § 1.6) can be used: we only interpret the fox as a teacher when he holds the common attribute of the birching rod. This is the case in the Manchester woodwork and in a Book of Hours made in London c.1320–1330, where two facing pages show a school parody (ill. 98).¹⁴ On the left-hand page is the orange-coloured fox, sitting on a bench, with a green rod in his right paw and a yellow paddle in his left. He is holding both the punishing instruments forward. On the facing right-hand page is a dog, standing on his hind legs, with his tail to the floor, holding a book up with both his forepaws. The green lines and bushes on both pages suggest a continuous landscape, demonstrating that the scenes belong together. Moreover, in this manuscript, there are many cases where the scenes on two facing pages belong together.

Printed parodies

The parodying of school became a popular theme in print as well. Parodies are present in the earliest printed books, among which were many texts used in teaching and learning. A woodcut of an ape teaching two foxes was used in 1490

ill. 98. *Fox with paddle teaching dog, Book of Hours, London, c.1320–1330. London, British Library, ms Harley 6563, f 22v–23r.*

© British Library.

¹³ See: ‘The misericords lecture’ of Ayers Bagley at http://iconics.education.umn.edu/misericord/misericords_text.htm (June 2007).

¹⁴ London, British Library, ms Harley 6563, f 22v–23r.



ill. 99. Pieter Brueghel,
The ass at school, 1557.
Berlin, National Graphic
Collection,
inv.no. KdZ II 641.
© KSK/Jörg P. Anders.

in the margin of the frontispiece of a study book for dictating, the *Formulario da ditare littere*, printed in Venice.¹⁵ The best known sixteenth-century print of a school parody is Breughel's 'The ass at school', printed after a drawing signed and dated 1556 (ill. 99). Its message is largely the same as in the sculptures and manuscripts mentioned above: like wolves will be wolves, even if you bring them to school, an ass will remain an ass. As the caption puts it:

'Al reyest den esele ter scholen om leeren – Ist (Even if the ass goes to school to learn –
eenen esele. Hy en sal gheen peert weder keeren.' If it is an ass, it will not return a horse).

The Latin variation includes a witty allusion to study in Paris, maybe because it was destined for a more international audience:

'Parisios stolidum si quis transmittat asellum. (If you send a stupid ass to Paris, if it is
Si hic est asinus non erit illic equus'.¹⁶ an ass here, it will not be a horse there).

This is quite a complex picture, with some obvious Boschian details, and it has been misunderstood in the past: it is often said to be a depiction of a classroom that is a mess because it is taught by an ass. The captions alone prove this wrong; the ass is a student, not a teacher. It is in the right corner of the drawing, leaning on a counter, reading sheet music, with a pair of glasses and a burning candle on the

¹⁵ Janson 1952: 168, note 25.
¹⁶ Orenstein 2001: 142.



counter. In front of him is a schoolmaster surrounded by a large bunch of unruly pupils, some reading, some half undressed, some making faces. There is also a group of older men, one wearing a beret, sitting together in a side room, reading, with some school baskets with books hanging on the wall. A similar basket, but enlarged, is in the foreground, with an inkwell hanging over the rim and a girl hoisting books into it. There are also a number of the beginnings of alphabets, on boards and sheets lying around. The teacher, who is hitting a pupil on his bared buttocks, for unknown reasons is dressed in fashion of the fifteenth century, from his headwear to his pattens, and he has stuck the rod in his hat. There is another rod, leaning in a pisspot beneath a bench to the left. A woman is looking at the scene through a window screen. While the general idea of the parody is clear – school will not change the nature of children¹⁷ – many details remain mysterious.

Although, as these two examples show, various animals could be used in parodies, the preference for apes involved in this human activity of learning prevailed in printing as it had in manuscript illumination. By the end of the fifteenth century, the word and image ‘ape’ were more generally used as a synonym for a fool. Janson writes: ‘These satirical references to simian in human guise provided a new didactic [my italics] “raison d’être” for the visual ape-travesties and thereby helped them to survive the death of manuscript illumination’.¹⁸

The ape school theme reached its height in one of a series of prints showing apes involved in human activities, engraved by Pieter van der Borcht in the 1580s. Page-

ill. 100. Pieter van der Borcht, *Monkey school*, c.1580. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, Prints Collection, inv.no. RP-P-OB-26784. © Rijksmuseum.

¹⁷ Orenstein 2001: 144.

¹⁸ Janson 1952: 168.

size depictions show apes, sometimes wearing pieces of human clothing, but never fully dressed and mostly naked, in episodes also encountered in both the earlier marginal decoration of Gothic manuscripts and the contemporary work of Pieter Brueghel and his followers. Between a sea battle, the siege of a castle, a tournament, a hunting party, a kitchen, the workshop of an alchemist, a peasant dance, ice skating and popular games, there is a print showing a monkey school¹⁹ (ill. 100).

In quite a large room with a door, windows, and a stove, four teachers and 28 pupils can be seen. The two teachers in the left half are male, dressed in long cloaks and hats, while the teachers in the right half are female, in dresses and aprons, with 'Dutch' bonnets. The pupils are divided as well: 16 on the left side and in the foreground are males, wearing only jerkins or nothing at all. The twelve in the right part are females, recognizable by their bonnets and sometimes their long dresses and aprons. The two apes in the door are a male and a female, like the two warming by the fire. Two teachers are seated, the male in a high chair on a board, the female in a cane chair with a foot-warmer, both hearing the lesson of the first pupil waiting in line with his or her book; both teachers hold the rod. The other two teachers, in the foreground, are punishing pupils with the rod, beating the bare backs of a male and a female monkey respectively, till bleeding.

This print is full of school implements. Almost all monkeys, whether or not clothed, bear double writing cases around their middles, consisting of an inkwell and a pen case. Some are writing, clearly with quills, on what seem to be sets of boards that could be used either opened or folded over. Others read from books, while on the floor there are more books and a large board. Seven baskets and two school sacks are hanging from hooks in the walls or standing on the floor; in some of them books can be seen, but one basket has fallen over displaying pieces of fruit or marbles. The monkeys just entering carry things as well: the male a school sack and a book, the female a basket. All monkeys sit on low, long benches, or stand in line, apart from those being punished; one female sits on presumably a stool at a spinning wheel. There is a chest used as a table, on which sit a jug and some fruits, while another jug is on the floor. The walls are covered, but it is unclear with what, some roof beams can be seen, and the floor is paved with large flags in a chessboard-pattern. The windows in the room are open, letting in light, with lattice above; a large fire is burning in the stove. There are two versions of this print: one shows two monkeys defecating on the top of the fireplace, which gives the print a slightly different atmosphere. The same effect can also be encountered in the monkey schools in manuscripts: sometimes one of the monkeys is peeing or defecating, with the rest of the scene similar to others.

The monkey school print was published at the end of the sixteenth century in a number of versions with various captions, long or short, in Latin, French, Dutch and German. This one reads:

<p>'Les singes vieulx de l'homme imitateurs, sont en finesses aux singeots precepteurs.'</p>	<p>(Monkeys that imitate people are really practising mimicry).</p>
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Another one bears a six-line German poem, stressing that monkeys cannot be educated:

<p>'Seht was Müh hatt die Schuel, man lernet, lieset, sitzet / Sagt auf die Lection vermahnnet</p>	<p>(Look what use is the school, one learns, reads, sits / says his lesson punished until</p>
--	---

¹⁹ Luyten 2004: 199 and 208-209 (Plate 183).

das man schwitzet, / Es hilfft doch was es kan
es wil nichts in der Tropf. / Der hatt ein Hasen-
ohr, der einen Esels kopf. / Eine Affe lernet
nichts und Affen bleiben Affen / schickt man
gleich über sie Schulmeister oder Pfaffen.’

he sweats / It does not help at all; nothing
goes in the basket / One has a hare's ear,
the other an ass's head. / A monkey learns
nothing and monkeys stay monkeys / if
you send to them masters or pastors.)

Yet another one bears two French quatrains, focussing on the moral lesson for the viewer:

‘Ces singes, ces Guenons assis dans leur école
Qui suivant leur état scavent jouer leur rôle
Ressemblent aux gens trompeurs qui dans
l’occasion
Par leur hyposcristie scaventse faire un nom.
Et quand vous les croyés de Catons en nature
En deriere ils vous sont toute une autre figure
La crainte les retient, ne le voyés vous pens
Ils se moquent de vous, et vous montrent le cul.’

(These apes sitting in their mixed school
following their nature playing their role
Look like people who impose and on
occasion
in their hypocrisy make up a name.
And if you think they learn Cato by nature
In the back they show you something else
They hide their fear, you can't see their thoughts
They make fun of you and show their ass).

This last one was clearly written for the version with the defecating monkeys on the stove.

One of the other prints of this series shows monkeys playing children's games.²⁰ In the foreground is a monkey riding a hobby-horse, wearing a mask with a human, bearded face and holding a birching rod high; disguised as a school teacher in this way, he scares some monkeys in jerkins away. Janson sharply noted the similarities and differences between the monkeys in the manuscripts and the monkey series of Pieter van der Borcht: ‘Although far more realistic and detailed than their marginal predecessors, these engravings preserve the same “droll” spirit, but they also display a heightened perception of human frailties derived from the social satires of Pieter Brueghel the Elder. Taken as a whole, the series constitutes an extraordinarily precise and comprehensive mirror of human vanity and folly in terms of everyday life’.²¹

4.2 Teachers and pupils

Teacher portraits

In a manuscript in the Vatican Library dated 1459 and containing Nicholas of Lyra's commentary on the New Testament,²² the initial Q opening the title page is decorated with a detailed depiction of a school, with Nicholas as the teacher (ill. 101). The manuscript is large, but the image measures only c.7 x 5 cms, so the details are really delicate. The image was painted by a Flemish illuminator.²³ What can be seen is the corner of a building with a tower and pinnacles, a double row of columns and an inner courtyard with grass, birds and a deer, with two persons (children?) standing in the corridor behind. From the courtyard a staircase and an arched door can be seen, which lead into a square ‘classroom’. A (non-existing) hole in the side wall – for artistic purposes – permits a view inside the room. There is also a staircase leading down to a cellar under the room.

In the classroom, the teacher in a red cloak and hat sits on the right, in a high wooden chair with a book in his lap and his right hand in a speaking gesture. There

20 Willemsen 1998: 276, ill. 223.

21 Janson 1952: 169.

22 Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cod. Urb.Lat. 13, f 1r, ‘Magneus Nicolaus de Lira super novo testamento’, dating in the frame ‘ANNOD/MCCCC/LIX’. On folio 325 the completion of the text is dated on October 22, 1458.

23 ‘In f 1 ornamentum ex floribus et bestiis manu perita scholae flamandae [...] littera prima Nicolae de Lyra ex cathedra doctentis imaginem exhibet’, in the Vatican catalogue of the Codices Urbinateis.

ill. 101. *School in initial,*
Flemish illuminator, 1459.
 Vatican City, Apostolic
 Vatican Library, ms Urb.
 lat.13, f 1r, detail. © BAV.



is something black in or near his right hand, probably a rod. Opposite, a listener in a brown chasuble is seated on a bench with a book on the lectern table in front. To his right a second listener in a red cloak is standing, while two more are sitting behind the lectern table, wearing cloaks and hats; the left one seems to be writing, while the other one seems to have a sheet or book before him. The floor is tiled, the roof beamed, and the brick walls have small discharging arches in the bottom zone. In the wall to the right of the teacher a window can be seen, to the side of which an alphabet tablet is hanging from a nail.

This charming little image can be regarded as a typically Flemish rendering of a common subject, that is, the depiction of the author of a manuscript as a teacher on the title page of his text – especially when that text was used for educational purposes, which many of the texts copied were anyway. It depended on the artist and the patron how this image was executed; while many times a ‘portrait’ of the author wearing doctor’s robes and a beret would be sufficient, often a listener is added, or a small group, or even a whole audience. Sometimes the author is given a punishing device, characterizing him as a school teacher, and the audience is deliberately turned into a class of pupils. In the most detailed versions, both lesson and punishment are depicted, but they may be in the same frame.

Many scholars and authors were shown as teachers. A 1554 Dutch historiated bible, *Boeck van den kersten ghelove* (Book of Christian faith) that shows the author Dirc van Delf in the initial on page 1, also has a depiction of Pythagoras teaching a group of grown-up (bearded) listeners; to make the meaning clear he has been labelled ‘heydensche meyster’ (pagan master).²⁴ In a manuscript of Boccaccio’s

²⁴ Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België, ms 21974, f 1r (author) and 50v (Pythagoras).



ill. 102. School within city view. London, British Library, ms Harley 621, f 71r. © British Library.

ill. 103. Grave slab of Amand de Brevimonte, died 1439, formerly in the Church of St. Donaas in Bruges. Drawing taken from: Vermeersch 1976: pl. 68.

ill. 104. Memorial brass of 14-years old Thomas Heron in St. Mary's Church in Little Ilford. Depiction of brass rubbing taken from: Page-Phillips 1970: Fig. 17.

book about famous men and women, a school can be spotted in the background of a large image showing a female pilgrim and a noble woman on a road outside a walled and moated city.²⁵ An opening in the city wall allows a classroom to be

²⁵ London, British Library, ms Harley 621, f 71r.

viewed (ill. 102), with a teacher in a chair behind a lectern with books, opposite three pupils with books on a bench behind a horizontal lectern. This story clearly gave an opportunity to depict a city school, with the author Boccaccio as a teacher.

A last opportunity – literally – to be depicted as a schoolmaster is known from the stone slab that covered the grave of Amand de Brevimonte, dean of the chapter of St. Donaas in Bruges and *magister*, who died on October 2, 1439. The gravestone, originally in the church of St. Donaas, is known from a drawing and prominently shows De Brevimonte in his capacity as a master: he is sitting in a high teacher's chair holding a stick (originally a rod or paddle?), while in the zone below five boys in tunics are reading from open books (ill. 103).²⁶ Just as being a master was something to be remembered for, having been a schoolboy could be presented proudly as well. The memorial brass of John Kent who died in 1435 mentions in its epitaph that he was a 'scolaris novi collegii de wynchester' (pupil of the new college at Winchester)²⁷ and the small brass commemorating 14-years old Thomas Heron, now in St. Mary's Church in Little Ilford (Essex), shows the deceased in a long tunic with a very prominent double writing case on his belt, making sure he was remembered a schoolboy (ill. 104).²⁸

Aristotle instructing Alexander

Although Aristotle was depicted on occasion as a pupil, brought to school as part of his *vita* (life story), he is shown most often as a schoolmaster, teaching a young prince. As legend has it, Aristotle was the private tutor of Alexander the Great, 'possibly the most impressive bit of home-schooling on record'.²⁹ An illustration of this was used as an episode in the life of Alexander, one of the most popular heroes of medieval literature, but also as a portrait of Aristotle, and it is among the most numerous of depictions of lessons in manuscripts. One of the most beautiful is in a manuscript of the *City of God* by Augustine, dating from around 1478 (ill. 105).³⁰ It shows a small but royal Alexander before an old and wise Aristotle. As in a cartoon, their names have been added, with an arrow connecting the name with the matching head. Aristotle sits in a decorated chair, dressed in exotic clothes, wearing a pale blue turban but also the white doctor's jabot. A sculpted and rotating lectern is on a chest-like table beside him. A book stands open on the lectern, while more books are lying on or resting against the table. All are bound in coloured and stamped leather and closed with cleats. Alexander is dressed in royal clothes with an ermine collar over his ermine-lined purple-and-gold tunic, and is wearing a crown on his semi-long hair. He has his hands in his sleeves as if they were a muff and he was warding off the cold when standing still for a long period. For the same reason, Aristotle – like other teachers – is dressed warmly, his chair closed off and lined with a tapestry, his feet wrapped in his cloak resting on a cushion. The room they are in has a green tiled floor, a barrelled ceiling, marble columns and traced windows, and it permits a view into a corridor with marble flooring and statues (naked women holding shields, possibly virtues) attached to the columns. From the corridor, another room can be seen with a bed in it, indicating that the lessons take place inside the palace.

The texts about Alexander that circulated also gave way to another interpretation of his schooling, where the boy would attend school together with other children. The early fifteenth-century French manuscript *Le livre et la vraye hystoire du bon roy Alixandre* reads:

26 Vermeersch 1976: 161 and pl. 68; a schoolmaster with rod is also on a stone slab of c.1260 from Arpajon (France), see: Greenhill 1976: 109 and Plate 43a.

27 Brass in Headbourne Worthy church, depicted in: Orme 2006: 137.

28 Page-Phillips 1970: 17, thanks to Ineke van Beek for bringing this image to my attention.

29 Tracy Lee Simmons in a Washington Post review of Paul Cartledge's *Alexander the Great: the Hunt for a New Past*, December 2004.

30 The Hague, Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum, 10 A 11, f 377v, see: *Verluchte handschriften* 1979: 20.



ill. 105. *Aristotle teaching Alexander, in Augustine's City of God, Paris, c.1478. The Hague, Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum, 10 A 11, f 377v. © MMW.*

‘Apréz quant il fu saage le Roy phé le fist mett
lescolle aco[m]pan~gne denfanz de gentilz
hom[m]es’.³¹

(When he became wise the king sent his
son to school accompanied by children of
noblemen).

The image (ill. 106) thus shows Alexander saying his lesson to Aristotle in a schoolroom with some other boys, all dressed richly in the fashion of the day. Their fur-lined cloaks, brightly coloured collars and shawls and their short hairstyles indeed identify them as aristocratic children. Aristotle is dressed in a blue robe with a white fur collar, but wearing a black beret. Alexander, his coat lined with

³¹ London, British Library, ms Royal 20 B.XX, f 10v.



ill. 106. Aristotle teaching Alexander in History of Alexander, French, early fifteenth century. London, British Library, ms Royal 20 B. XX, f 10v. © British Library.

ermine again, stands before him with his book open, while Aristotle is speaking; the other three pupils hold books as well. The room has a flat, beamed roof, traced and glazed windows with wooden shutters and shows an arched passage to a similar room; in this way, a school building with various classes has been indicated. To the right of this scene is another school scene, showing Bucephalus escorted in by two attendants;³² the teacher looks basically the same, as do the four richly dressed, somewhat older boys around Bucephalus. This scene has a more abstract background, as if meant to be happening outside.

Aristotle as a teacher is an image found on many of the title pages of the works of Aristotle as translated by Brunetto Latini, called the *Tesoretto* or *Livre du Tresor*, of which many copies survive. He is shown twice in a French copy now in Oxford, as a teacher with a beret seated behind a lectern, instructing one or five boys, some with tonsures.³³ In these typical examples, Aristotle is characterized as a teacher, but there are no extra attributes to identify either Aristotle or Alexander. In many cases these extras have been added in the form of eastern clothing for Aristotle, being Greek, and royal dress for Alexander, being king. Another French copy of Latini now in London³⁴ shows Aristotle wearing an 'eastern' gown and a turban, pointing at a sheet that shows the characters 'ARISTOTOT'. Alexander is crowned and sitting before him, legs crossed. On a later page of this same manuscript there is another, anonymous teacher.³⁵ Flanking the opening of a book on virtues, there is a miniature of a monk dressed in red habit and blue hood, seated with a book on a lectern reading 'LE MAISTRE', the schoolmaster. The book on virtues is indicated as 'teachings':

'Ci fenist le livre de aristotes & comencent
les enseignem~s des vices et des vertus.'

(Here ends the book of Aristotle and begin
the teachings on the vices and virtues).

³² As identified in the online catalogue of the British Library manuscripts, see: www.bl.uk/catalogues/manuscripts, using the signature Royal 20 B. XX (June 2007).

³³ Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms Douce 319, f 9r and 86r.

³⁴ London, British Library, ms Add 30024, f 91r; see: Evans 1978: 305-329.

³⁵ London, British Library, ms Add 30024, f 124r.



ill. 107. Aristotle teaching, in Aristotle's *Politiques*, Poitiers, 1480-90. Paris, National Library of France, ms fr 22500, f 43v. © BNF.

ill. 108. Four scenes of education in Aristotle's *Politiques*, Poitiers, 1480-90. Paris, National Library of France, ms fr 22500, f 248r. © BNF.

The frontispiece of this book has a large diagram showing various professions (including writing), flanking the seven liberal arts. The arts are all depicted instructing small groups of listeners, mostly grown-ups and all with tonsures. Grammar is depicted here, deviating from the common image (see Chapter 6) as a seated monk with a rod instructing three novices, which means that the image has been translated into a cloister-school scene.

Sometimes, Aristotle is shown as Alexander's instructor more elaborately, when the image of him teaching the boy is one in a whole series and is usually preceded by an image of Alexander being presented to Aristotle and succeeded by several images of teacher and pupil together, mostly outside; one of the last episodes shown is often Alexander and Aristotle using astrological devices to study a nocturnal sky. These series of images are usually in copies of the work of Aristotle himself, like his *De secretis* [*secretorum*]³⁶ and they stress his role as a versatile teacher. In contrast, in books about Alexander the tutoring by Aristotle is just one scene in a story filled mostly with battle scenes because here the pupil, not the teacher, is the main character.

Aristotle's role as a teacher could be extended to show a classroom, and he could be assisted by other teachers as well. A copy of his *Politics* shows an image of three teachers instructing six boys and one girl (ill. 107).³⁷ The teacher shown frontally, in the middle, and somewhat larger than the other characters, must be Aristotle, with the rod against his right shoulder, a grey beard, a blue beret, a pink gown and

36 For instance in London, British Library, ms Add 47680, series of images from folio 6r (Alexander presented to Aristotle) onwards, ending at folio 53v with the astrology lesson.

37 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, ms fr 22500, Poitiers 1480-1490, f 43v, depicted in: *École au Moyen Âge 2007*: 4 (f 43v) and 25 (f 248r, the caption 'f 43' here is a mistake).

a black shawl. To both his sides are two more teachers holding birching rods up to their shoulders, both bearded and wearing long cloaks and headdresses. In between Aristotle and the teacher to his right, a little girl is standing in a green dress, wearing a red headscarf. The six boys are divided over the whole space, four of them holding books, one of the books containing music. They sit on a green patch (grass) while windows, columns and a balustrade of a building can be seen.

The same manuscript also contains an image of a scholar instructing eight young men (f 49v), while the text ‘a la discipline des jeunes gens’ (about disciplining young people) is decorated with a quartet of images (ill. 108) showing various sorts of things learned by those young people (f 248r). One of them is a classic school depiction of a child with a book standing in front of a seated master with a bundle of twigs (Aristotle, probably), but the other three are wrestling, a drawing lessons and a music lesson, with a young chorister singing from a book to a teacher. The wrestling takes place outside, the other three lessons are shown in three different rooms. Not only in theory, but also in reality, learning to read and write was just one of many forms of education.

Solomon’s wise lessons

Aristotle is strongly rivalled by Solomon for the title of the most depicted teacher in medieval manuscripts. In fact, the beginning of a copy of Solomon’s wise sayings is one of the commonest reasons to depict a school scene, which makes teacher Solomon appear in almost every medieval encyclopaedia (like the *Omne Bonum*³⁸), historiated bible³⁹ and many a breviary – for obvious reasons I am not listing them all here, but merely sketching their common denominators. In general, the images of Solomon and Aristotle are very much alike, showing an old scholar in exotic dress, often holding a rod, teaching a young boy in rich clothes, who sits or stands before him. The headdresses make the difference: Solomon is wearing a crown, like the young Alexander, as they are both kings, and unlike Aristotle, who being a Greek philosopher is usually wearing an ‘eastern’ hat, and unlike Solomon’s pupil Rehoboam, who is largely known only for his famous master. As in illustrations to Aristotle, the lesson by Solomon is usually part of a number of scenes from the teacher’s life.

The stereotypical image shows Solomon as a teacher on the frontispiece of a book with his sayings. As the first (top left) of four scenes showing the wise king,⁴⁰ Solomon with a large rod extended in his hand is seated on a ‘sella’ with lion’s heads, with two knights standing behind him, and he is speaking to a child sitting on a gold-brocade cushion before him. The boy, who can be identified as Rehoboam, is dressed in a tunic with matching chaperon, has short hair, and sits with one knee lifted, an open book resting on his knee. In the background a curtain is pushed open, to reveal the scene to us. The accompanying text is about discipline and paying attention. The other three images show the well-known wise judgements of Solomon, including that concerning two women fighting over a baby. Images very similar to this one are common in breviaries⁴¹ and historiated bibles, like Petrus Comestor’s *Historia Scholastica*.⁴²

A French bible, once used in the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris,⁴³ has such a ‘standard’ image of Solomon teaching in the initial P of ‘parabole’ heading the wise sayings of Solomon (ill. 109). Solomon is on the left, crowned, in a tunic and lined gown, sitting on a low red-and-blue bench that has legs painted gold and a green cushion. Solomon has raised his left hand, while his right holds a large rod (looking

38 London, British Library, ms Royal 6 E VI, pars I, f 7r.

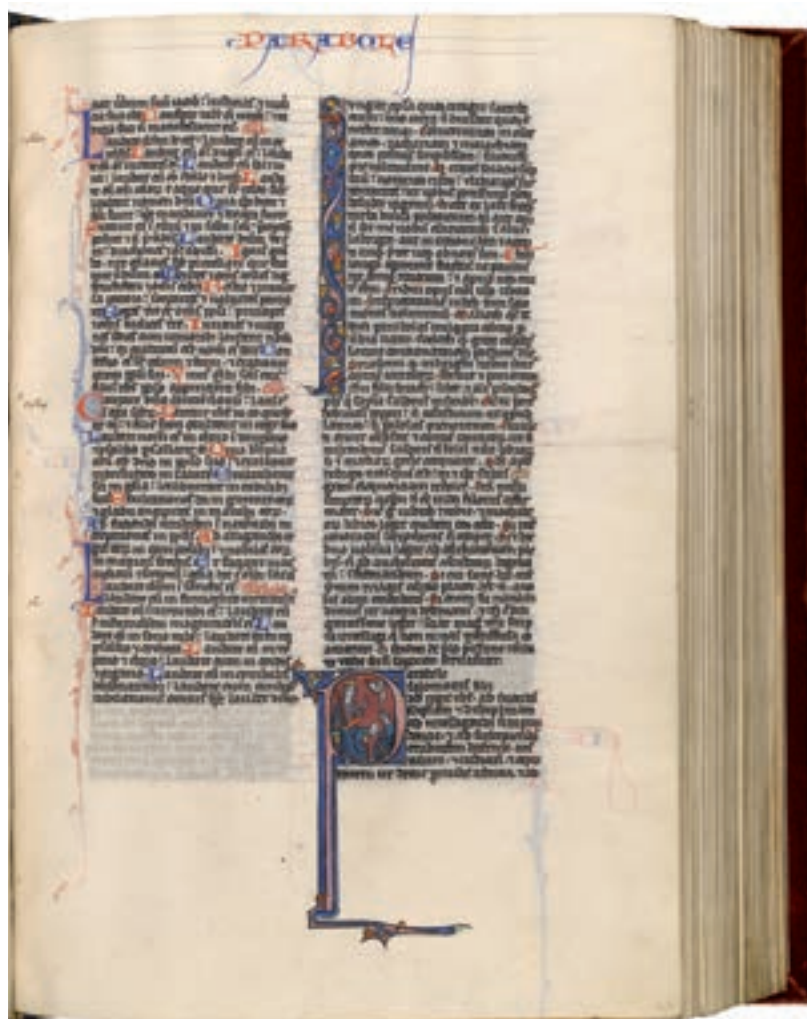
39 For instance: The Hague, Koninklijke Bibliotheek, ms 78 D 34, f 50r.

40 London, British Library, ms Royal 17.E.VII, pars II, f 1r.

41 Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cod.Urb.lat. 603, f 313v (from the library of Federico da Montefeltro in Urbino).

42 The Hague, Museum Meermanno-Westreenianum, ms 10 B 23, f 317r (top left of four images too).

43 Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, ms 1060-1975; Solomon on f 213r.



ill. 109. Solomon teaching in historiated bible from the cathedral of Our Lady in Paris. Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, ms 1060-1975, f 213r.
© Fitzwilliam.

the pupil a white curtain has been pushed open, permitting a view of an abstract background with a dark red pattern. Solomon's left foot and both the pupil's feet stand on the curve of the inside of the initial. An image like this is encountered often, and the variations are in details: in a similar depiction in another French bible, the rod is more clear, the pupil is wearing just a tunic stripped down (and is shivering), while Solomon is holding a book with his hands in his gown, maybe to keep them warm during the lesson.⁴⁴

In only a few cases, do we find an image of Solomon teaching to a whole class, like at the start of the book of Solomon in a French historiated bible, the *Historia Scholastica* of Petrus Comestor, of the beginning of the fifteenth century (ill. 110).⁴⁵ On page 285, there are two miniatures, one above the other; in the lower one Solomon is receiving the Queen of Sheba⁴⁶ and in the top image, Solomon is shown as a teacher instructing three young boys and three adults. Solomon is crowned,

44 Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, ms 1056-1975; Solomon on f 271r.

45 London, British Library, ms Royal 15 D.III.

46 Also on folios 299r and 305r and identified in the online catalogue of British Library manuscripts, see: <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/manuscripts>, using the signature Royal 15 D.III (June 2007).



ill. 110. *Solomon teaching in historiated bible, French, early fifteenth century. London, British Library, ms Royal 15 D.III, f 285r. © British Library.*

seated in a canopy chair behind a lectern full of books; he is speaking. Opposite are the six auditors, seated in semicircular benches on trestles, divided according to their ages. On the first bench sit three young boys in tunics with books; one is paging through the book in his lap and looking up to Solomon. The bench behind holds three men with beards, one with a coif listening, his hand supporting his chin, the other two with elaborate headdresses and books. The scene is set on a yellow-and-black flagged floor and framed by a brick wall, behind which trees can be seen, against a wallpaper background. This school scene with Solomon as the teacher is followed by two related scenes: Justice enthroned with teacher and disciple and a teacher introducing a disciple to Wisdom.⁴⁷

Classical punishment

Both a punishment scene and a lesson are on the title page of a large fifteenth-century compendium by Nonnius Marcellus that once belonged to Federico da Montefeltro; the school scenes by an Italian hand are well-placed, because they open a book on grammar ('De arte grammatica Liber I').⁴⁸ Both scenes are in tones of red, pink, green and blue, with a yellowish brown for hair and furniture and a little black detail here and there; the setting is not realistic as no building is indicated and only a background of blue sky is provided for both episodes (ill. 111).

In the right-hand scene, a teacher in pink robes and beret sitting in a chair on a raised platform behind a lectern with an open book is teaching four pupils with open books in their laps, one of them holding his head in his hands as if bored. In

⁴⁷ As identified in the online catalogue of British Library manuscripts, see: www.bl.uk/catalogues/manuscripts, using the signature Royal 15 D.III (June 2007).

⁴⁸ Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cod. Urb. Lat. 308, f 2r; the text opens on f 2v; the Vatican catalogue of Codices Urbani identifies the hand as Italian and the contents of the scenes as 'duas scholarum aulas: in altera ludi magister discipulos docet, in altera discipulum tengo alterius sublatum ferula percutit.'



the left-hand scene, the same teacher is administering punishment: he is holding the tunic of a pupil up while hitting him on his bare buttocks with a rod. The mouth of the victim, who is held in place over the back of another pupil bending over, is opened: he is screaming in pain. Yet another pupil is holding his ankles in place. In the back another nine heads of pupils can be seen, while behind the master's back two are sitting on a bench, at least one of them reading. The specific punishment pose depicted here, with one of the pupils stretching the one to be punished over his back and the rest of the group watching, is the typical one for pupils. It is found also in other manuscripts and works of art and was depicted in this manner as early as Roman times.⁴⁹

A punishment device – usually a birching rod or ‘plak’ (paddle), sometimes a stick or whip – is the standard attribute of a teacher, as punishment was seen as a standard ingredient of schooling, in addition to the lesson. This is true not only for iconography but for texts as well. One of the most exaggerated rods in manuscript illumination is held by the teacher in a manuscript of the *Schwabenspiegel* produced in Hagenau around 1430 (ill. 112).⁵⁰ The image has a height of 25 cms, the rod alone is 10 x 4 cms. The ‘lerer’ is using it to hit the bare bottom of a child, while five of its mates are watching. The accompanying text explains that a teacher must not hesitate to chastise a pupil when his work is not good, for it is in the benefit of the child, but he must hit in such a way that there will be no blood.

The connection was made by the users of the books as well as by the designers. A Latin encyclopaedia *Fons memorabilium universi* by Dominicus de Bandinis, made in Cologne for an English patron c.1444–8, contains over a hundred pen drawings that may have been made by the scribe himself, as they remain close to the text and sometimes incorporate phrases in the same handwriting. In the left margin is a drawing (ill. 113) of a master with a large, floppy hat, holding a firm whip in his one hand while tugging up a boy's tunic up with his other, exposing the pupil's buttocks. The boy is pointing at the characters ‘a b c d’ with a blunt stick, saying them – his mouth is open. Five other pupils are looking on, with behind them a banderole inscribed with their line: ‘pater n[oste]r qui e[s]t in c[o]elis ra~’, the first line of the Lord's Prayer. In the right margin a woman is feeding a baby that holds a toy windmill, and there are more children on the page; the text is about caring for children. The manuscript is still in the environment it was used in originally, in a medieval college of Oxford.⁵¹

ill. 111. *Punishment scene and lesson* in *Grammatica of Diomedes*, Italian, 1450–1475. Vatican City, Apostolic Vatican Library, ms Urb.lat.308, f 2r. © BAV.

49 Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv.no. 9066 (fresco from the Villa of Julia Felix in Pompeii, first century AD), see: Verdenius et al 1968: 56, and Rome, Museo Classico delle Catacombe di Pretestato, inv.no. PCAS Pre 273 (on the sarcophagus of the young girl Aelia Afanasia, last quarter of third century AD), see: *Aurea Roma* 2000: 593–595; see also: Willemsen 2003: 37.

50 Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België, ms 14689–91, f 173v.

51 Oxford, Balliol College, ms 238E, f 50v; the manuscript can be viewed online at: <http://image.ox.ac.uk/show?collection=balliol&manuscript=ms238e> (June 2007).



ill. 112. *Teacher hitting pupil in Schwabenspiegel, German, c.1441-1445. Brussels, Royal Library, ms 14689-91, f 173v. © KBB.*

ill. 113. *Punishment in class, marginal drawing in Dominicus de Bandinis, Cologne, c.1445. Oxford, Baillol College, ms 238 E, f 50v. © Baillol College.*



Punishment was seen as typical for school, and egodocuments (see § 4.4) underline that quite considerable beating occurred at school. This also found its way into colloquial speech: ‘being beaten’ was used as a synonym for going to school. The punishment scene became a popular ingredient of any elaborate school scene, especially in print. For instance the school scenes in calendars (see ills. 162 & 163), the monkey school of Van der Borch (see ill. 100), the school scenes in ‘block books’ (see ills. 171 & 177) and a Swiss print made by Hans Weiditz c.1430 for a Cicero edition⁵² (see ill. 4) all show a pupil being beaten prominently. The latter includes a lot of school equipment besides the rod: one pupil is holding a hornbook, three are holding books, one or two have writing cases hanging from their belts, and two or three other wear school sacks. The master is seated behind a lectern, the pupils sit on benches, and most of them are wearing berets in class.

Teachers killed with school equipment

A miniature depicting the martyrdom of St. Felix in a Flemish manuscript of the *Legenda Aurea* from around 1445-1460⁵³ shows five boys torturing the saint to death (see ill. 235). From the story it is clear what the setting is. Felix, called Saint Felix in Pincis to distinguish him from other Felixes, was a teacher in Rome in Late Roman times. When his pupils found out he was a Christian, they killed him, in the classroom, using their school tools as weapons. From this setting, it is clear that the room depicted is meant to be a school room, and the implements used are school things. This unusually detailed image illustrates an episode taken from the *Golden Legend*, the most famous collection of Saint’s Lives, compiled by Jacopo da Voragine between 1260 and 1275 and translated and edited hundreds of times in the Later Middle Ages.

⁵² Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Estampes Ea II rés.

⁵³ New York, The Morgan Library, M.672, f 87r; see: *Leven te Leuven* 1998: 367.



ill. 114. *St. Felix killed by his pupils in Alsace Legenda Aurea, Strassbourg, 1419. Heidelberg, University Library, Cod. Pal. germ. 144, f 288r. © UB Heidelberg.*

in Strasbourg⁵⁴ (ill. 114), but here the master, still wearing a beret, has been tied to a column and is being flagellated with whips by two pupils, while the third pupil holds a sharp object with a handle that might be meant as a penknife. The iconography is clearly based on that of the flagellation of Christ, while the people with whips are depicted smaller and in 'boys' clothes' and the possible penknife and the beret are inserted as clarifying details. A depiction in a Bruges manuscript of Titus Livius's *Ab urbe condita* of the fifteenth century shows pupils using rods made of twigs to beat their tonsured master who is stripped to his loin cloth and tied to a column.⁵⁵

The written *vita* of Felix in Pincis already mentions the objects used by the pupils for their evil deed:

'Here beginneth the Life of S. Felix, said Inpincis

Felix was surnamed Inpincis, and is said of the place where he resteth, or of the pointelles of Greffes [*pinca*=stylus]. A greffe is properly called a pointel to write in tables of wax, by which he suffered death. And some say that he was a schoolmaster and taught children, and was to them much rigorous. After he was known of the paynims, and because he confessed plainly that he was christian and believed in Jesu Christ he was delivered to be tormented into the hands of the children his scholars, whom he had taught and learned, which scholars slew him with their pointelles, pricks, and greffes, and yet the church holdeth him for no martyr but for a confessor'.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Heidelberg, University Library, Cod. Pal. germ. 144, f 288r; the whole manuscript can be consulted on: <http://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/sammlung1/cpg/cpg144.xml> (September 2007).

⁵⁵ Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, ms fr 34, f 253v.

⁵⁶ See for the full text for instance: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/voragine/goldleg2.xxix.html> (September 2007).



ill. 115. Sign-board of a teacher, Ambrosius Holbein, 1516. Basel, Art Museum, inv.no. 311.
© Kunstmuseum.

ill. 116. Backside of ill. 116. Photo taken from postcard.

Felix is not the only legendary person who is said to have suffered death at the hands – and pen tips – of his pupils. The same episode is part of the *vita* of Bishop Stephen of Antioch whom ‘the sons of the Antiochenes dispatched with reeds sharpened like lances’⁵⁷ and Marcus Arethusius, who was delivered to schoolchildren to be stabbed by their penknives,⁵⁸ while Prudentius writes about the martyrdom of schoolmaster Cassian, who is killed by his pupils breaking writing tablets on his head and piercing him with styluses.⁵⁹ Unsurprisingly, St. Cassian became the patron of teachers. Johannes Scotus Erigena was killed by the iron pens (‘styles’) of the boys that he taught, according to William of Malmesbury.⁶⁰

The killing of a schoolmaster using writing equipment was a modest *topos* in these saint’s lives and a reason to mention writing equipment used by pupils, which could lead to one of those rare depictions of a classroom. The *topos* does not say too much about the teachers themselves, apart from the general implication that their deaths in this manner are even the more tragic because they are inflicted by the boys whom they had taught – sometimes they are even using the teacher’s own punishment implements (rods) on him! – and the story holds a strong implication of ‘biting the hand that feeds you.’ This in its turn implies that the children should have been grateful to the master, even when he had been rude to them, as is said of Felix in Pincis.

Advertising education

Teachers had to be hired, either by a city or by parents, which means that they had to make known their presence. Usually, they were approached because of the work they did, sometimes when they were still under contract by a school; in order to have a good school, city councils did not hesitate to buy a teacher away from another city. But teachers advertised their services too, especially those keeping side schools. A street sign for a teacher offering lessons has been preserved in the museum of Basel (Switzerland); it is probably more elaborate than was common, and it has been preserved mainly because it was painted by Ambrosius Holbein, son of Hans Holbein the Elder, representing a very famous family of artists. Obviously, it was used as an advertisement for a school master.

The sign measures 55 x 65.5 cms and can be read from both sides (ills. 115 & 116), that have the same long text and date:

57 Evagrius, *Historia Ecclesiae* 3.10, see for the full text for instance: www.tertullian.org/fathers/evagrius_3_book3.htm (September 2007) and Theophanes, *Chronicle*.

58 Gregorius Nazianzenus, *Contra Iulianus* 4.89.

59 Prudentius, *Peristephanon* IX, see for the full text for instance under Prudentius at www.thelatinlibrary.com (September 2007).

60 This apocryphal story ‘doubtless refers to some other Johannes’, see: http://jcsn.org/StudyCenter/Encyclopedia_Britannica/EMS_EUD/ERIGENA_JOHANNES_SCOTUS_c_800_.html (September 2007).

‘Wer jemand hie der gern welt lerrnen dutsch
schriben . und la[e]sen uß dem aller kurtzisten
grundt den Jeman erdencken kan do durch ein
Jeder der vor nit ein buchtaben kan der mach
kurtzlich und bald begriffen ein grundt Do durch
er mag von im selber lerrnen sin schuld uff
schriben und la[e]sen . und wer es nit gelernnen
kan so ungeschickt were Den will ich um nut
und vergeben gelert haben und gantz nut von
im zu lon nemen er syg wer er well burger Ouch
hantwerckß gesellen frowen und juncfrouwen .
wer sin bedarff . Der kum har in . der wirt
druwlich gelert umm ein zimmlichen lon. Aber
die Jungen knaben und meitlin noch in den
fronuasten wie gewonheyt ist . anno .
mcccccxvi’

(If there is anyone who wants to learn to
write and read German for whatever reason
anyone can think of for one who did not
know a single character, he will soon and
quickly find a reason. For he can learn
himself to write off and read his debt.
And who cannot learn it, that means is not
suited I will have taught him for nothing
and charity and will not take any pay from
him. Who they are, citizen or craftsman's
assistants, women or girls, who needs it,
come in. He will be taught thoroughly
for a reasonable pay.
But the young boys and unmarried
girls as is customary. A.D.
1516).

The message is clear: anyone can come and learn to write and read here, male and female, rich and poor, even if you do not know an A from a B before, and: no cure, no pay.

A 1515 print of a schoolmaster by Albrecht Dürer (see ill. 247) is accompanied by a long text, in which education is compared with learning from God; it is not known if this image was meant or used for a sign as well.⁶¹ The French National Museum of Education in Rouen preserves a poster advertising the services of a master in Montpellier from 1551. It shows various alphabets and numeric sequences as an advertisement for a school ‘de comptes, d’écriture, d’arithmetique et de géometrie [...] à convenant et raisonnable prix’ (counting, writing, arithmetic and geometry [...] as agreed and at a reasonable price). The master is depicted on his poster with beret and in knickerbockers, a sword at his side, holding a scroll and something vaguely resembling a rattle, probably a device for signalling the beginning or end of the lesson.⁶²

Schools in print

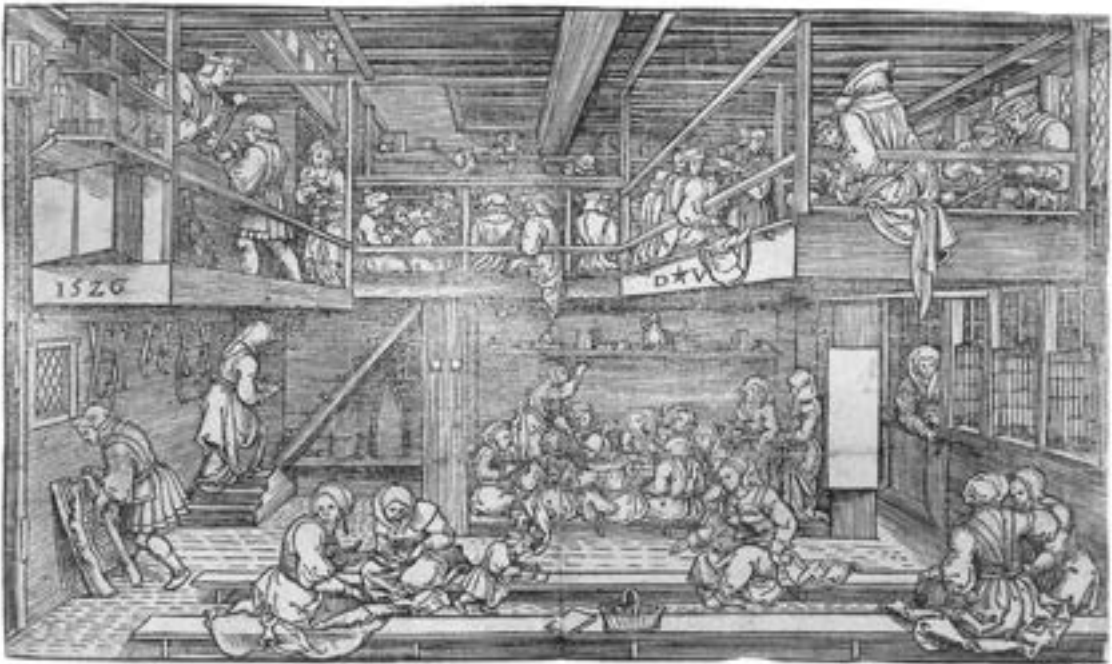
As far as I know, only one print of a full school has been preserved, which could be labelled as ‘genre’, meaning that the depiction of a school was actually the only subject here and it was not destined as an illustration in a (school) book. This is a print by Dirck Vellert of Antwerp, signed with his ‘logo’ D*V (he was long known as ‘Master DV with the star’) and the year 1526, preserved in one unique copy in the British Museum (ill. 117).⁶³ It shows a building with two stories, the upper one constructed of three wooden balconies inside the room and reachable by a staircase. On the ground floor, there are only females, apart from one small boy writing on the second bench, and a boy on the left side folding a chair. In the upper story, there are only men, small and bigger, apart from one girl standing in line before the master on the left. Before her in line, a boy stands in front of the master’s lectern, saying his lesson (indicated by his moving hands) while the master is speaking to him (indicated by a speaking gesture). The teacher holds a ‘plak’ (paddle) in his left hand, while a rod is leaning against the front of the lectern. Two more ‘plakken’ are in the lower zone, hanging top-up against the column in the middle that is supporting the balcony.

In the upper story, the boys are arranged in groups, with at least three bigger boys – or young teachers – presiding over the groups, with most pupils seen from

61 Reicke 1971: between pages 56 and 57.

62 Rouen, Musée National de l’Éducation, ‘Affiche publicitaire d’un maître écrivain, 1551’ (no inv.no.).

63 London, British Museum, Department of Prints & Drawings, PPA 89343, 1857-5-20-7, 13.3 x 22.5 cms; it was included in: Nijhoff 1933: pl. 266 nr. 2.



ill. 117. *Dirck Vellert, Mixed school, 1526. London, British Museum, Prints & Drawings, inv.no. PPA 89343. © British Museum.*

the backs. All boys and men wear short tunics and hose, with berets on their heads. Some cloaks or sheets are hanging down over the rim of the balcony. On the ground floor is a group of girls and women with baskets, maybe meant to depict a needlework lesson. The girls and women wear long dresses and aprons, their hair covered with headscarves. Everybody is sitting on benches. There are many objects in the print: books and baskets on the benches, foldable chairs hang on the wall and shelves with books and jugs are put up; behind the master is a bookshelf with a book bag and an inkwell, while a pendulum is in the top-left corner of the print. The boy standing in front of the master has a purse on his belt, while the young man in the top-right corner, with his back to us, is wearing a dagger. To his right,

ill. 118. *School, sculpture, French, early sixteenth century. Paris, National Museum of the Middle Ages – Cluny Baths, inv.no. Cl. 203. © Author.*



another young man is writing on a tablet, with a small boy looking on. The very small boy on the ground floor is writing with his left hand; this is seen often in prints and may mean nothing – it may just have been drawn as a right before ending up reversed in the print.

In the left wall is a square, glazed window, while above the date '1526' a window seems open – the perspective is not convincing here. More glazed windows are in the right wall, both in the upper and in the lower zone. There is also the door, with the top half open, just being opened from the outside by a woman. Another woman is just going up the stairs. The floor seems to be made of chequered flagstones, while the staircase, the balconies and the beamed roof are made of wood. The walls are in small brickstones. Although it is one of the most elaborate depictions of the interior of school, neither its original purpose nor its intended audience is known.

A French sculpture from the beginning of the sixteenth century, now in the Musée de Cluny in Paris (ill. 118)⁶⁴ has been interpreted as a 'genre' scene as well. The polychromed wooden group is 42.5 cm wide and 22.5 high. It shows a teacher with beret and shawl in a chair on the left, and seven schoolboys, one saying his lesson and pointing in a book, the others mostly reading from three more books and a scroll to the far right. A nice detail is the little cat or dog in the foreground, on its hind legs, looking up to the pupils. It is not clear what type of schooling is depicted here: the boys show tonsures, but their clothes clearly typify them as lay pupils. The sculpture has functioned as a freestanding group for centuries, but it may well have been part of a sculpted altar originally, probably illustrating the education of some saint, like the polychromed stone sculpture in the cathedral of Amiens (see cover ill.) that is close to the Cluny sculpture both iconographically and stylistically.

The teacher is a fool

In 1515, Hans Holbein the Younger illustrated a printed copy of the *Encomium Moriae* (Praise of Folly) by Erasmus of Rotterdam that belonged to the humanist and schoolmaster Oswald Geisshüsler (known as Myconius or Molitor) in Basel. The artist, who as a young boy was taught by Erasmus himself, was only 18 years old then and the programme of marginal drawings took him no more than ten days to complete. Combining their reminiscence of medieval drôleries and their satirical nature, they have been described as standing – like their maker – on the borderline between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.⁶⁵ One of them shows Erasmus teaching (see ill. 12) and another one Erasmus on the street, looking back to a beautiful woman that just passed by. Where a foolish teacher is mentioned in the text, Holbein drew a man with a jester's cap, who is using a birching rod to beat a child across his knee (ill. 119). The pose and the rod make sure the scene was understood as a school scene, identifying the teacher (and his patron!) as a fool – as are all the professionals and groups mentioned in this book. The 'foolish teacher' is a paradox, which may have added to its popularity as an image; a schoolmaster in jester's outfit, with a large rod addressing an audience made up of a noble boy, a jester and some chickens, was used in 1528 by the Paris printer Soquand as his vignet.⁶⁶

The parody of a teacher goes even further in a large (48.5 x 33.5 cms) woodcut produced by Alecusson d'Augspurg in Lyon and printed by Francois Matheis in Paris in the sixteenth century (ill. 120).⁶⁷ This 'satire against the teachers' shows an ape in a full jester's outfit teaching two children. The ape-master is equipped with a book and rod, a double writing case hanging from his belt and quills stuck behind

ill. 119. *Teacher with a fool's cap, drawing by Holbein in copy of Praise of Folly, Basel 1515/1516. Basel, Prints Room, inv.no. 1662.166. Photo taken from: Jensma et al 1986: 24.*



64 Paris, Musée National du Moyen-Âge – Thermes de Cluny, inv.no. Cl. 203.

65 Saxl 1943; the 1515 book was reprinted by Schmid 1931.

66 Catteuw 2003: 7, see: www.psy.kuleuven.ac.be/adhp/meprenten.htm (September 2007).

67 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Cabinet des Estampes, TF 2 Rés. (from the collection of the Abbey of Marolles, which means that it was once owned by Louis XIV), depicted in: Bouchot s.a.: vol. I, no. 23.



ill. 120. *Teacher as a fool, French, sixteenth century. Paris, National Library of France, Prints, inv.no. TF 2 Rés., P17646 © BNF.*

ill. 121. *Presentation of the Virgin, Flanders, end fifteenth century. Brussels, Royal Museums of Art, inv.no. 347. © Author.*



his ear. The size of the woodcut allowed clear depictions; the rod is 17 cms long in this print. To the left of the giant jester-ape-teacher sits a child writing with a quill in its left hand into a book in its lap, while on the other side a boy stands holding a book, saying his lesson to the teacher. According to the banderoles, the teacher was not necessary:

‘IL NETIENT PAS A TOY DE NOUS FAIRE
FOLS OU LU TOUT ENRAGEZ’

(It was not up to you to make us foolish
or read everything with anger)

The child on the left side replies:

‘VOUS ESTES UN SINGE POUR TOUT
POTAGE’

(You are a monkey in every way)

while the banderole of the one on the right rhymes:

‘MAISTRE JE VOUS SUIVRAY DU BON
COURAGE’

(Master I will follow you with great
courage).

This last sentence is in mirror image; this may simply have been a mistake, but it may be intentional too, literally ‘turning his words around’. That the boy is writing with his left hand, may also have been deliberate, but should more likely be



ill. 122. *The Virgin Mary brought to the school master. Detail of window with the life of the Virgin, Chartres cathedral, early thirteenth century. Photo taken from: Sauvanon 1998: 62.*

attributed to the process of printing woodcuts, which come out mirrored from the original drawing. Left-handed writers are as common in prints as they must have been uncommon in reality.

4.3 Educating Holy children

The school in the temple

The outer wings of a Southern-Netherlandish altarpiece now in Brussels⁶⁸ show scenes from the life of the Virgin, a familiar subject in the Late Middle Ages. The outer part of the left wing shows, within one setting, the Annunciation and the Presentation. In the latter (ill. 121), the young Virgin has been brought to the temple by her parents, Anne and Joachim, and is climbing the stairs, where an angel awaits her. In an opened church porch, a master stands waiting, a letter (starting with 'Qui...') in his hands. He is wearing a beret, a cloak, a lowered chaperon and a belt purse. He is welcoming the young girl to a large room behind his back, where three girls are sitting, each with a book in her lap. One seems to be speaking, one is clearly reading.

This painting is on one of the shutters of a triptych painted at the end of the fifteenth century by a Brussels painter called the Master of the Life of Joseph or the Master of Affligem Abbey; the triptych comes from the Benedictine Abbey of Affligem in Hekelgem (Flanders). When closed, the Annunciation, Presentation, Nativity and Adoration of the Kings can be seen. The inner part shows scenes from

68 Brussels, Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten, inv.no. 344-345 and 347-354. See: *Koninklijke Musea* 1984: 344-345.

69 Antwerp, Museum Mayer van den Bergh, ms 946, f 687v, see: Nieuwdorp and Dekeyser 1997: 93.

70 Manhes-Deremble 1993: 172: 'Deux scènes exceptionnelles, que l'on ne trouve dans aucune représentation médiévale de la Vie de la Vierge: Marie enfant est conduite par Joachim et Anne vers un maître, puis assiste avec d'autres enfants à l'école.'

71 See for instance: Fritsche 1987: 270-271 and Abb. 446 (in the cathedral of Regensburg); Frodl-Kraft 1962: Abb. 258 (from Straßengel, now in Vienna); Fitz 2003: 554 (in the cathedral of Halberstadt).

72 Vadée 1990: 186.

the Life of Christ: the Circumcision, Christ among the Doctors, the Carrying of the Cross, the Crucifixion, the Entombment and people leaving the grave. The scenes of the life of the Virgin are a prelude to those of the life of Christ. The presentation of the young Virgin in the temple is a stock depiction within the life of Mary. Not so often however has this event been interpreted as her entering a school. In this case, the girl is welcomed by a schoolmaster, typically dressed in cloak and beret, to a room where a number of girls her age are already engaged in reading. In this version of the temple, Mary will be educated. That is why she is carrying a book bag. A similar but less explicit image is in the Mayer Van den Bergh breviary, where at least five other girls can be seen through the arches of the temple Mary enters, one with a book placed in the window light.⁶⁹

This rendering of the subject is not typically Flemish. It is found for the first time in an early-thirteenth century window of Chartres cathedral depicting the life of the Virgin. Here, the education of the Virgin is divided over two window panes, one showing the Virgin being taken to a master by her parents Joachim and Anne, the other showing her seated in the temple school with five other girls (ill. 122). In both scenes, the master holds a rod. The author of the volume of the *Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi* devoted to the windows of Chartres boasts that this depiction is unique to medieval art,⁷⁰ but it is just at the beginning of a long tradition. The idea of Mary being educated in the temple does not always assume literacy: in some composite windows where the presentation and the presence of Mary in the temple are separate scenes, Mary and other girls are shown in the temple weaving or engaged in needlework.⁷¹

The paintings of Ottaviano Nelli for the chapel in the Palazzo Trinci in Foligno, completed in February 1424,⁷² show Anne and Joachim encouraging Mary to climb up the stairs to a lavishly marbled room, where a master is reading from a desk and five girls are seated reading books (ill. 123). In this chapel, there is a second scene depicting Mary at school, older now and reading, but still accompanied by the other girls and the same teacher. Contemporary to these paintings, the sculpted 'Boeslunde altarpiece' with the life of the Virgin made in Northern Germany around 1425⁷³ shows a scene of Mary at school, standing before the master with a book, while two girls are behind her. The master is wearing a Jewish hat; the unknown artist realized that the master was teaching in a temple. Also in this case, a scene with the presentation of Mary precedes the school scene, but as in Chartres there are no classmates present in the presentation scene. A sixteenth century stained-glass window in the Collégiale Saint-Martin in Champeaux (Paris region, France) shows Mary being brought to the temple by both her parents. A master awaits them in the doorway; behind him, two more girls can be seen within the building.⁷⁴

A scene like this would be familiar to a medieval spectator, whether he was in the Netherlands, Germany, France or Italy. He would recognize the event of a child brought to school for the first time by his or her parents, meeting the teacher; the child excited and afraid at the same time, the parents with some melancholy. The child would be carrying a (probably new) schoolbag, or a book, writing tablet or alphabet tablet. In the school, his future classmates are already seated. This may be one of the reasons for the abundance of descriptions and depictions of 'clever men' (saints, church fathers, romance heroes) brought to school as a child, or depicted attending class. It is a common image in artistic life cycles and written *vitae* in all areas of Western Europe. It shows that medieval people shared the idea that education produced wisdom, and that education was normally to be found outside the home.

73 Copenhagen, Nationalmuseet, inv.no. D 10277; from the church at Boeslunde (Sjælland), originally from the Carmelite Church of Skaelskør that was demolished in 1550-1560; see: Grindler-Hansen 2002: 90-92.

74 *CVMA* 1978: 93, fig. 43.



ill. 123. *The Virgin at school, fresco, Ottaviano Nelli, 1424. Foligno, Palazzo Trinci, chapel.*
© Author.



ill. 124. *St. Nicholas brought to school, second scene of Russian icon, c.1500. Stockholm, National Museum, inv.no. NMI 272.* © Author.



Christian areas too, as we can see from the images of children brought to teachers by their parents in Jewish manuscripts and on Russian icons showing the life of, for instance, St. Nicholas (ill. 124). There is even a very recognizable version in a sixteenth-century colonial Mexican manuscript, showing Aztec fathers bringing their sons to school (ill. 125). It is in the so-called Florentine Codex, illustrating the *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España* by Bernardino de Sahagún and produced in Tlatelolco in 1575-1577, bilingually in Spanish and Nahuatl (spoken by Aztecs).⁷⁵ De Sahagún was a

ill. 125. *Aztec children brought to school by their fathers in the General History of New Spain by Bernardino de Sahagún, Mexico, 1575-1577. Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Cod. Mediceo Palatino 218-220, Vol. I, f 232v. Photo taken from: Aztecs 2002: 36.*



Spanish Franciscan friar who travelled to Mexico after the conquest in 1521 and compiled his impressive 'History of New Spain' there in 1558-1577. It represents 'an extraordinary attempt at Christianising by means of cultural understanding rather than force'.⁷⁶ The school image must be understood within this attempt: schools were part of the institutionalising of the Christian faith in the New World, and the fathers bringing their sons in their Aztec cloaks to the teacher must have provided a familiar image, both to the compiler and to the intended, Old World audience. Again, this literally far-fetched image underlines how common it was in Europe at that time to send children to a school – common enough to be exported, both as an iconographic model and as a real system.

The Virgin Mary was also shown at school sometimes, without the event of being brought there. An example can be found in a Swiss manuscript of c.1350,⁷⁷ where Mary is in the front row of a small class, crowned and with an opened book. Next to her is an adult woman wearing a headscarf and holding a book, and behind are three more young girls sitting on a bench, one with a purse, one writing (holding tablets and stylus) and one reading music. They wear long, striped dresses, falling over their feet and closed at the throat, Mary's attracting attention by the large brooch used as fastening. The teacher, to the right, is wearing a purple beret and a cloak, is seated and holds an opened book. The woman in the back, covering her face, might be St. Anne. There is an angel in the scene too, coming down from heaven – in this case the well-known story of the Virgin reading while the angel came and announced the birth of Jesus to her, was set inside a school! This very original annunciation scene is the lower of two in a page-size initial, with an image of the birth of Jesus above – with a book in it as well. The manuscript contains some persons behind lecterns and a depiction of Mary and the Christ child with a book too (page 44v); reading seems to have been a theme for either the patron or the artist; moreover, the beautiful depiction of Christ among the doctors (on page 39v) betrays some predilection for the world of the learned as well.

There are some other manuscripts in which the episode of Anne teaching the Virgin was interpreted as a school scene. In a wonderful manuscript in New York,⁷⁸ Anne is shown with Mary before her, both of them reading together from a book (ill. 126). This is a conventional group, but there are three more girls Mary's age in the room, turning what seemed a private lesson into a class. Here, the iconography of Anne teaching the Virgin to read has been mixed with that of a young saint being questioned by the master inside a school. In the border of this image, treated in *camaieu*, a monocolour technique related to grisaille and meant to give the impression of precious metalwork, there is a typical image of the presentation of the Virgin in the temple.

It should be underlined that this rendering of the theme is extraordinary. St. Anne teaching the Virgin is one of the most popular themes in medieval art, but images of this scene almost always show just the two women with one book between them, stressing that this was personal instruction and did not involve a schoolmaster or classmates. Normally, the mother Anne is pointing in the book and the daughter Mary is reading, although rarely pointers and even pens or styluses are included, as in a c.1475 window of Rouen cathedral.⁷⁹ There are literally hundreds of depictions of this theme and Anne is, without competition, the woman most depicted as literate in medieval art. In a window in Stratford-upon-Avon from 1330-1350, where Anne is teaching Mary from a book, the text is also significant:

LEFT PAGE:

ill. 126. *St. Anne teaching the Virgin in a classroom.* New York, The Morgan Library, ms H.8, f 186v. © Morgan Library.

75 Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, ms Mediceo Palatino 218-220, see: *Aztec* 2002: Fig. 27 (p. 36) and cat.no. 344 (p. 487-488); the 'school image' is in Vol. I, f 232v.

76 *Aztec* 2002, 488.

77 Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms Douce 185, f 35v (region of Konstanz, at the border of Germany and Switzerland).

78 New York, The Morgan Library, ms H.8, f 186v; many thanks to Kathryn Rudy for forwarding this image, which she found, to me.

79 Rouen, cathedral, Tour St. Romain, by Guillaume Barbe, see: *CVMA* 2001: 350.

D[OMI]NE LABIA MEA APERIES' (Lord, open my lips) the beginning of a sentence from the Hours of the Virgin that was used widely in primers.⁸⁰ Female donors of the sixteenth century sometimes had themselves depicted with St. Anne teaching the Virgin to read, for instance, in stained-glass windows.⁸¹ This choice may reflect a desire of the donor to present herself as an educated woman and shows that St. Anne could be considered a patron for female literacy.

Christ at school

The most famous and most exemplary child of the Middle Ages is, of course, not Mary but the Christ child himself. An image in the 'Zürich calendar' of 1508 (ill. 127) shows him, recognizable by his aureole, taken to school by his mother Mary, who holds his book. The accompanying text above the image gives her motivation: 'I have raised my child smart and handsome, and would like to let it go to school.' The master answers that he would love to teach the child and do his best.⁸² Jesus is about to shake hands with the master, who is wearing a high beret and sits in a wide chair; in his left hand the master holds a long stick, that may be for pointing or for punishing. Two obedient pupils are on a bench in the foreground. Two firm walls and a traced window can be discerned in the classroom. Another woodcut shows Jesus brought to school – only the door can be seen – by Joseph and Mary: the child carries a schoolbag over his shoulder and does not seem too willing to go.⁸³

This theme seldom occurs in stained glass, the exception being two windows in the German town of Esslingen (federal state of Baden-Württemberg). In the Frauenkirche (St. Mary's Church) there, the school-going Christ child is depicted, the boy holding a writing tablet.⁸⁴ We find the same scene in the Stadtkirche St. Dionys (Church of St. Dionysius).⁸⁵ As the stained glass in both churches may well be by the same hand, the maker may well have known the Zürich calendar or a related print.

Some stories from the cycle of infancy miracles of Christ, performed when he was living in Egypt, took place at school, and they involve the teacher and classmates of Christ. The stories have become known through the so-called gospels of pseudo-Matthew, and their content was once summarized by the Dutch specialist on medieval literature Herman Pleij as follows: there, the young Jesus is an irritating child, constantly demonstrating his supernatural powers, challenging his friends to games only he can win: they throw ceramics and his never gets broken, they climb a rainbow and he doesn't fall off, the teacher corrects him and just falls dead.⁸⁶ Of course, the miracles were meant to demonstrate how extraordinary Christ was, even at a young age, but one cannot help but sympathize with the Egyptian children picking on Jesus for showing off.

The stories are illustrated in a Dutch historiated bible, *Boeck vanden kersten ghelove (in duitsch)* dated 1554, in a historiated initial D.⁸⁷ There we see Jesus in the air, proudly showing his unbroken ceramic jug, while another child stands holding his jug and a third falls down, his tunic open, his jug broken; in the foreground is a dead child with a high ('Jewish') hat. This is not the first depiction of the cycle: one of the oldest must be the illustrated Italian manuscript of the pseudo-gospels of Matthew, *Liber de infantia salvatoris* (Book on the childhood of the Saviour) of the end of the thirteenth century,⁸⁸ that show the scenes in an unrealistic architecture, with Christ surrounded by people in 'exotic' clothes indicating that they are Jews. The limited number of lines of text written in large capitals suggest that this book was meant or used for beginning readers. On f 35v Christ is brought to school by

80 Marks 1998: 247 and Plate 24.

81 For instance in the church of St-Germain-l'Auxerrois in Paris, the Collégiale Saint-Martin in Montmorency and the church of St-Pierre-St-Paul in Ablis, see: *CVMA* 1978: 45, 122 and 126 respectively; in the church of St-Symphorien in Genouilly, see: *CVMA* 1981: 193.

82 'Ich hab min Kind erzogen zarl und schon / Und wolt es gern zu schul lassen gon / Liebe frou ich wil es gern leren / Und min bestes zu[r] im Feren'.

83 Nijhoff 1933.

84 Wentzel 1958: 158 and Abb. 305.

85 Wentzel 1958: 108-112, 117 and Abb. 141.

86 Pleij 1991: 99-117, there 107-108: 'Jezus is in deze verhalen een uitgesproken etterbak.'

87 Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België, ms 21974, f 75r.

88 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, ms lat 2688, title on f 64v.



ill. 127. Jesus brought to school in the Zürich calendar, c.1500 Photo taken from: Wouters and Visser 1926: 315.



ill. 128. Christ at school in the pseudo-gospels of Matthew, Italian, thirteenth century. Paris, National Library of France, ms lat 2688, f 36v. © BNF.

his parents at the age of ten (said in the text⁸⁹); he is carrying a large writing tablet – relatively; in the original this is only 1.5 cm high – with two holes that will reappear in a number of the following school scenes. The next depiction (ill. 128) shows him at school, in a short tunic and barefoot, with what are meant to be Christian signs on his writing board. Christ stands before the chair of his teacher, who hits him on the head with a long stick. To the left are three other children, wearing long tunics and shoes, sitting on a bench, two of them holding books and the third writing with a gold-coloured stylus on a writing tablet showing strange signs that are meant to be Jewish: Christ is being punished for his deviating language. Some of the following scenes (f 38r, 40v) show other episodes involving Christ, his classmates and his teacher, who is killed by Christ in the end (on f 53v) and, of course, awakened to life again after complaints of bystanders (on f 55v).

A manuscript in Oxford⁹⁰ contains an even more extensive rendering of these infancy miracles of Christ based on the pseudo-gospels. There are usually two or three scenes on a page and seven of the miracles were performed at school or involve his (Jewish) master and classmates. The first ones illustrate Christ challenging the authority of the master: Christ says or does something against the will of the teacher, who then touches or hits him, and subsequently falls dead by Christ's power. After complaints from outsiders, Christ is corrected by his father and brings the teacher back to life. In these scenes (on folios 10v, 13r, 17v-18r,

89 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, ms lat 2688, f 35v: 'Tu[n]c 10. et maria blanchentes ih[esu]m: duxerut ip[su]m ad scolas ut doceretur' (Jesus when he was 10 and the Virgin Mary: she brought him to school to be educated).

90 Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms Selden Supra 38, studied in July 2004.

ill. 129. *Christ attacked by the schoolmaster.* Tring Tiles, English, c.1320-1330. London, British Museum, inv.no. M&ME 1922.4-12.1-8. © Author.



and 25r) the iconography is similar: Christ is standing, he wears a short tunic, is barefooted and has a halo; he is carrying a writing tablet or a book. The teacher is seated, wearing a hooded cloak with loose sleeves and a beret; he holds Christ's ear or hits his cheek.

Folios 22v and 23r show another story, in which the children of the village where Jesus lives have been put into an oven by their parents, because they are afraid of his strange behaviour and powers. Jesus, finding no-one to play with, asks the parents what is in the oven. They fearfully reply that there are just pigs in the oven; when they open the door, the children have really been turned into pigs. When the parents complain to Joseph, Christ restores the children to their normal shape. A last miracle, on folios 24r-24v, shows Christ climbing a rainbow, encouraging his friends to follow him. Some of them try, but, of course, they cannot do this, and they fall off the rainbow onto the ground, dead. One of the children reports Christ to the master (seated, in cloak and beret), so they must be classmates. The children wear short tunics like Jesus, but they also have Phrygian hats that characterize them as Jews. Of course, after the necessary amount of complaining, the pupils are woken from the dead again. His stepfather seems to have had more power over Jesus than his teacher.

Closely related to the Oxford manuscript is a large series of 60 tiles, mostly in the British Museum and known as the 'Tring tiles' because they originate from the church of Tring in Hertfordshire.⁹¹ In a technique called *sgraffito*, the miracle episodes have been depicted in bright yellow onto a brown background, in squares of 16 x 16 cms, two to a tile. Also here, the stories happening at school can be recognized, for instance, in the third and fourth scenes, where the Christ child is attacked by a classmate in front of the teacher with beret and book; the child falls dead from Christ's back and is only woken after the parents' complaint, depicted in the right half of the tile. In the seventh scene, a master with beret seated to the left is slapping Jesus in the face, while on the right Christ is accompanied by two classmates with writing tablets (ill. 129).

Writing Christ Child

There are a number of sculpted and painted representations of the Christ child, on his mother's arm or lap, writing on a scroll, a sheet or in a book, dipping his pen in an inkpot. Sometimes he is even being nursed by Mary while he is writing. Charles

⁹¹ London, British Museum, inv.nrs. 11.575-11.584, see: Eames 1980: 14-71 and Pl. 15-30.



Pankhurst⁹² collected 38 examples, divided them into a standing type and a seated type, each of the types subdivided into one where the writing is implied by the presence of writing gear, and one where Christ is actually writing and there is an actual inkwell visible. This Madonna-type must have been invented in manuscript illumination around the 1380s, and became popular shortly after 1400, when the inkwell appeared for the first time. Spreading from Mainz, the theme remained popular until its sudden disappearance in the mid-sixteenth century.

Missing from Pankhurst's inventory, but only explicable by his study, is a depiction of the Christ child on his mother's arm writing on a wax tablet, using a stylus (ill. 130), in a wooden statue from Münstermaifeld, dated to the beginning of the sixteenth century.⁹³ A stylus was already visible in an early and very original version of the theme, painted at the beginning of the fifteenth century in Austria,⁹⁴ where the Christ child learning to write has actually fallen asleep in the process (ill. 131). He is in his mother's lap, holding a white (ivory or bone) writing peg with a globular end, the tip of which is still in the book in his lap. From the child's belt, behind the book, a rectangular writing case is hanging, in the same white colour. On the right, next to the strap, another white peg has been put onto the side of the case; this may be a second stylus. Mary is looking down with sympathy on the sleeping child. Although the article by Pankhurst does not mention the Christ child using anything other than parchment and ink, the replacement of those by these less-permanent writing implements – the general idea about writing into a wax tablet is that it can be erased – may be significant for understanding the image.

ill. 130. *Christ child writing on wax tablet, Madonna of Münstermaifeld, early sixteenth century. Bonn, Rheinisches Landesmuseum, inv.no. 17275. © Author.*

ill. 131. *Christ child fallen asleep during writing, Austrian, early fifteenth century. Paris, Louvre Museum, inv.no. RF 2047. © Author.*

⁹² Pankhursts 1941.

⁹³ Bonn, Rheinisches Landesmuseum, inv.no. 17275.

⁹⁴ Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv.no. RF 2047.

When, in the depictions in Pankhurst's inventory, the words that Christ is writing can be deciphered, they read along the lines of 'I am the way' and the Lord's prayer, to be summarized as the words of Christ the Teacher.⁹⁵ This leads the author to interpret the image basically as a devotional one, with symbolic meanings for the objects and actions, and to discard the idea that the theme may have risen from a more genre-like depiction of the education of Christ. Our images may change that, however, as Christ is clearly trying out writing here – and even getting tired of it – using precisely the things that were common in school and that are depicted mostly within an educational context. In this case, the image can be viewed within that broader theme of the education of Christ, as one of many ways of creating a more domestic scene for the statue, where the worshippers could identify with the Christ child as a 'normal' child, and with Mary as his mother, who raised her son as they raised their children.

A similar conclusion is drawn from another image of Mary educating her son, in an only partly preserved fresco of the 1380s by Tomaso da Modena above the pulpit of Modena cathedral. In this painting, Mary is shown reading from a single leaf and Christ on her left arm 'reading from a small book with large characters clearly intended for a child'. In this case, the image may be seen 'as a testimony to the spread of lay literacy and the importance of women both as readers of literature and Books of Hours, and as educators of their children'.⁹⁶ The theme of Mary teaching Jesus to read is presented more often, not only in painting but in sculpture as well, for instance, in woodwork on the 1515-1525 stalls of the cathedral of Our Lady at Aarschot.⁹⁷

Teaching the Holy Family

This last image is closely connected to the much wider spread image of the Virgin educated by her mother Anne (see above). The activity could be transferred to the image of Anne holding her daughter Mary who in her turn is holding her son Jesus. In those cases, this 'Anna-te Drieën' or 'Anna Selbstdritt' incorporates the theme of Anne teaching the Virgin and that of Mary teaching her son, with a book in one or all pairs of hands.

The idea of teaching within the family also influenced the image of the extended Holy Family called the Holy Kinship, which links some of the apostles to the family of Jesus. According to tradition, Anne was married three times, to Joachim, Cleophas and Salomas; from each marriage a daughter named Mary was born. In the next generation, Jesus was born from the marriage of Mary with Joseph. From the marriage of Mary Cleophae and Alphaeus, four children were born: James the Lesser and Simon Zelotes are the oldest, Joseph Justus and Judas Thaddeus the youngest. The marriage of Mary Salome with Zebedeus resulted in two children, James the Great (the oldest) and John the Evangelist (the baby).⁹⁸

A number of Holy Kinships show generations reading together, as in the lead-glazed window with this theme of 1521 in the Église Ste-Christine in Ferrières-Haut-Clocher (Normandy), where some of the children are shown with books, learning to read.⁹⁹ The Holy Kinship window in St. Mary's Church in Hanau near Frankfurt stresses the fact that reading is a learning process by depicting one of the child apostles, James (Jacobus Minor) with a writing tablet with handle and a quill, just finishing the character N of his alphabet (ill. 132). The window, produced at the end of the fifteenth century, includes some books too.¹⁰⁰ Most famous for its books is Quentin Massys's painting of the Holy Kinship in Brussels.¹⁰¹

95 Pankhursts 1941: 292-306, 304.

96 Gibbs 1989: 162-163.

97 Steppe 1973: ill. 36 after p. 188.

98 For the full line-up of the Holy Kinship, see: Willemsen 1998: 261-265; for a thorough study of the theme see: Esser 1986.

99 See: *CVMA* 2001: 167.

100 Hess 1999: 252-253, Tafel 191, 202 and Farbtafel XXV.

101 Brussels, Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten, inv.no. 2784. See: *Koninklijke Musea* 1984: 186.



ill. 132. *James the Lesser with writing tablet in stained-glass window with the Holy Kinship. Hanau, St. Mary's Church. Photo taken from: Hess 1999: 241.*

Lucas Cranach the Elder takes the idea one step further yet. His Holy Kinship in Vienna of c.1512¹⁰² (ill. 133) includes not only two children (Simon and James the Lesser) reading from a book together as in Massys's picture, but also one of the children (James the Great) reading from a book towards one of the parents (Zebedeus). This man, to the right of the painting, is holding a birching rod in his right hand, while his warm cloak and black hat further typify him as a teacher. As this painting is a portrait of Cranach and his family-in-law in the form of a Holy Kinship, and Cranach is pictured to the left as Alphaeus, the schoolmaster-Zebedeus has the face of his father-in-law, a lawyer from Gotaer. In Cranach's preceding 1509 print of the same theme¹⁰³ (ill. 134), this detail was even more clearly a schooling scene, with the adult Alphaeus holding the birching rod accompanied

102 Vienna, Akademie der Bildenden Künste, Gemäldegalerie, inv.no. 542, see: Hinz 1993: 46.

103 See: Geisberg 1974, Vol. II: 527.

ill. 133. *Holy Family*,
Lucas Cranach sr., c.1512.
Vienna, Collection of
Paintings in the School of
the Arts, inv.no. 542.
© Gemäldegalerie.



by two children (James and Simon) reading from the book on his knees. To the right of this print, another parent seems to be encouraging the education of his child: the hands of Zebedeus are on the shoulders of his son James who is carrying a bag in his right hand and a book in his left. The iconographic details of this part of the scene are strongly reminiscent of the parents taking children to school as seen elsewhere in this chapter. A nice detail is the signature of Lucas Cranach, that is placed on a writing tablet lying in the foreground.

A related theme is that of St. Sophia and her family, popular from 1420 onwards especially in Eastern Europe. Often scenes with the saint are depicted as an extension to the Holy Kinship on sculpted altars. Here Sophia, a personification of Wisdom, is presented with her three daughters called Hope, Faith and Charity, usually reading from books, with Sophia educating her girls as St. Anne educated the Virgin.¹⁰⁴

In the context of the education of the Christ child and his immediately family, one more thing must be stressed. The most frequently depicted 'intellectual' scene from Christ's youth is his disputation with the doctors in the temple at the age of twelve. In this scene, a fixed episode both of series illustrating the infancy of Christ

¹⁰⁴ Taken from the PhD-project of Judit Sebő at Central Eastern University Budapest, 'Saint Sophia and Her Context: a Mother Saint in Eastern Europe in the Late Middle Ages'; I would like to thank her for putting at my disposal her paper presented at IMC Leeds 2005 and all the images.



ill. 134. *Holy Kinship*,
Lucas Cranach sr., 1509.
Berlin, National Graphic
Collection, inv.no. 574-2.
© KSK.

and the seven sorrows of Mary, he is never shown learning or even writing. He does sometimes hold a book (see ill. 10), or sit behind a lectern,¹⁰⁵ but this deliberately shows him in the position of a teacher, not a pupil. That is exactly the meaning of this scene: Christ does not have to learn anything (anymore) – he already knows it all.

Small saints taken to school

Not only Mary and Jesus were thought of as having been educated properly. The written *vitae* of saints, both famous and local ones, and the life descriptions of wise men and heroes like Alexander and Percival, usually include records of their educational achievements. When these *vitae* are illustrated, or translated into art, many times education is one of the images provided, directly after the birth of the main character, and often the only image relating to his (or her) childhood. Most of the times education takes the shape of a school scene, but also the event of being brought to school by the parents was popular, and sometimes someone was depicted on his way to school, unaccompanied.

The choir of the church Sant'Agostino in San Gimignano is filled with frescoes by Benozzo Gozzoli depicting the life of St. Augustine. If there is a sequence to read these scenes, one might start at the bottom left, on the northern wall (ill. 135), where the saint can be seen as a child, brought to school by his parents first (to the left) and standing beside the teacher next (to the right). This fresco from 1464-1465 is known as 'The school of Thagaste' because in that Algerian city Augustine was born in 354 according to both the autobiographical *Confessiones* and the *Legenda Aurea*. In spite of this North African location, we see a typical fifteenth-century Tuscan city, with arcades and *palazzi*, in the middle of which the school is seen placed in an open portico. To the left is young Augustine, dressed in a dark green cloak over a pink

¹⁰⁵ For instance in a glass roundel in the Lord Mayor's Chapel in Bristol, c.1525, see: Cole 1993: 36.

ill. 135. *St. Augustine brought to school, fresco, Benozzo Gozzoli, 1464-1465. San Gimignano, St. Augustine's Church.*
© Author.



tunic and with dark green hose. His hair is ear-length and of a reddish colour. He is being presented by his parents, the Christian (later Saint) Monica and the Roman civil servant Patricius, to a schoolmaster dressed 'easternly' in cloak and turban with a short grey beard. The Latin wording underneath the fresco identifies this scene: 'When Saint Augustine was in his youth, he was handed over to a master of grammar by his father Patritius and his mother Monica [...]'.¹⁰⁶

By the clothing of both Augustine and the teacher, it is easy to recognize the pair again in the right-hand corner of the painting. The teacher is depicted in the act of punishing a pupil by hitting his bare back with a tawse; he is being held in place by another pupil who has bent over. A large number of other pupils are inside and outside the portico, some of them holding school equipment. A small boy with curly hair under a coif uses the balustrade as a desk, holding a quill and an inkwell, while the boy in the middle of the scene, in orange tunic and blue hose, holds a book and quill. Little Augustine seems to be reading from the alphabet board he is holding with both hands; his left hand covers the 'a' and 'o', but all the other characters can be read on the wooden board with a hole to hold it by or suspend it from.

Saint Augustine holds a similar alphabet board in another depiction of this episode, now in the Vatican picture gallery (ill. 136).¹⁰⁷ This is the earliest monumental painting depicting the subject, dating from around 1415 and attributed to the Venetian painter Nicolò di Pietro. The saint, identified by the inscription with his name, is again presented by his parents and welcomed by a schoolmaster. The master is seated at a lectern at the head of a long reading bench with a full class of boys behind it. Books can be seen in use and as well as an alphabet board like the one Augustine has brought. Both boards are rectangular, with a pierced handle and 'fins' next to the handle. Augustine, dressed in red, is carrying his board from his right wrist by a red

¹⁰⁶ 'Quemadmodum beatus Augustinus in puerili etate a padre Patritio et madre Monica a magistor Gramatice traditus ultra modum brevi profecit tempore.'

¹⁰⁷ Vatican City, Musei Vaticani, Pinacoteca Vaticana, inv.no. 40205; see: Pietrangeli 1996: 160 (no. 153); Grendler 1989: 143 and 145.



strap. On both boards a full alphabet divided over three or four lines is preceded by a small red cross. Strangely enough, the books and the board on the bench are turned towards the viewer, as if to present the texts and the alphabet; the schoolboys are pointing in the texts, but to them the characters are upside-down.

This panel painting was originally in an oval; the corners of the dark frame have been painted over the scene. It is one of a series of four. Besides this scene, showing 'the saint brought to school by Santa Monica', there is another childhood scene, where the saint is being baptised by Sant'Ambrogio. The other two panels show him dictating his *Regola* (convent rule) to his disciples and the saint teaching rhetoric.¹⁰⁸ Both these episodes have been depicted as a scene of teaching too, but Augustine has evolved from a grammar pupil into a scholar and a (university) professor; he is shown in adult clothes, teaching other adults from behind a desk with books.

The theme is present in manuscripts as well. St. Augustine is brought to school by both his parents in a German manuscript of c.1460 (ill. 137): here all persons are 'labelled' with their names, and the master in the school doorway has just taken the hand of little Augustine, who holds a writing tablet with black wax in his other hand. The master in cloak and hat holds a large rod in his free hand.¹⁰⁹ St. Jerome as a child is brought to school by his father in the Bedford Breviary of c.1425, which contains a number of similar scenes and a lesson scene as well.¹¹⁰

A stained-glass window in the church of St. Benedict at Biel (Switzerland) shows a variation on this theme. Within a series of windows devoted to the life of the patron saint, the chronologically first shows the small Benedict on his way to school (ill. 138). He is wearing a grey-blue tunic and white hose, has short hair with

ill. 136. *St. Augustine at school, Niccolò di Pietro, c.1415. Vatican City, Vatican Picture Gallery, inv.no. 40205. Photo taken from: Pietrangeli 1996: 160.*

ill. 137. *St. Augustine taken to school, German, 1460. Boston, Public Library, msf Med 77, f 1v. Photo taken from: D'Haenens 1986: 247.*

¹⁰⁸ Vatican City, Musei Vaticani, Pinacoteca Vaticana, inv.nos. 40204 (baptism), 40203 (rule) and 40206 (rhetoric); see: Pietrangeli 1996: 160-161 (nos. 154-156).

¹⁰⁹ Boston, Public Library, Rare Books Department, Msf. Med. 77, f 1v, see: D'Haenens 1986: 247.

¹¹⁰ Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, ms.lat. 17294, fol. 577v, see: D'Haenens 1986: 244; the lesson is on f 459v.

ill. 138. *St. Benedict on his way to school, stained-glass window, 1547. Biel, St Benedict's Church. Photo taken from: Beer 1965: colourplate after 164.*



a tonsure and a halo. Over his right shoulder he carries a schoolbag, and in his right hand he holds a large writing tablet with a handle. In the two columns of black wax, writing as well as the characters of the alphabet have been scribbled.¹¹¹ The bag and the tablet identify the saint as a schoolboy here. On his way to school, Benedict is not accompanied by adults; this is an original choice of the artist.

In this window with Benedict on his way to school, in my opinion the building to the right with the opened door is meant to be the school and the small saint is depicted at the moment of reaching the building, as in the scenes with children taken to school. The depiction is schematic and the view inside the building limited, but both the outer appearance of a small, rectangular building and the tiled room with windows seen through the door are in line with other depictions of schoolrooms. The placement of this building next to a church reflects the usual actual situation, but in this case may have a symbolic meaning as well, foreshadowing the rest of Benedict's life, also depicted in this window. The scene is now the third panel from the left in the bottom row of a composite window

111 Beer 1965: 170 & Tafel 149.

showing both the ‘vita Benedicti’ and the ‘passio Christi’. The window is in the choir of the church and has been dated to 1457, when the choir is documented to have been consecrated.¹¹²

Saints in class

Even more often than saints being taken to school or going there by themselves, an actual lesson is depicted. It can take basically two forms: a child sitting or standing before a teacher, with no or just one other child present or a child standing at a teacher’s desk within a classroom, surrounded by other pupils. The second type seems to be a later version, mainly present in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century art, but the first scene keeps being produced alongside the second. Moreover, there does not seem to be a real difference in content: in the case of one-on-one education, sometimes known private tutors are meant, but also in some of the class scenes the teacher is named. In the ‘simple’ scene too, many times ‘any teacher’ is indicated and the execution of the scene derives from the style of the work of art, the space provided and the specific function of the scene.

In the Basilique St. Martin (St. Martin’s Cathedral) in Liège (Belgium), one of the large stained-glass windows has the life of St. Lambert, the patron saint of the city of Liège, as its theme. The glass was produced in the city around 1527. In the bottom section of the window, three scenes are devoted to the infancy of the saint, the very first one illustrating the infant saint being taught by his master Théodart¹¹³ – the name is known from written sources. The master is seated with an open book in his lap, the child standing before him. This scene is the most simplified version of a school scene in stained glass and points to a personal education; there is no evidence of a school here, and Théodart is not given the attributes of a teacher. Many times, the school scenes in stained glass are more specific, featuring teachers holding paddles and rods, and the depiction of a full school is not uncommon.

Simple school scenes like this are found most often in thirteenth-century stained glass windows in French cathedrals illustrating a saint’s life. It is not only the most famous saints who receive this ‘treatment’; locally venerated saints are also depicted in this way. The locally popular St Mammès’s life is illustrated in a window in Auxerre cathedral, that dates from the second quarter of the thirteenth century.¹¹⁴ The window depicts the life of St. Mammès, with the scene in the middle of the bottom row showing him at school. To the left is a teacher in a beret seated on a chair, his left hand holding up a rod, his right hand in a speaking gesture. To his right is the young saint, recognizable by his halo, with another pupil, and both are holding open books. The scene follows the birth of the saint, bottom left, and is in its turn followed by St. Mammès speaking to a scholar, bottom right.

Iconographically, this scene is not very different from, for example, that in the window with the life of the Virgin in Chartres cathedral, where Mary is seen at school with other girls, and those in the windows of the same cathedral showing the lives of Saints Germain d’Auxerre, Julien l’Hospitalier, and Nicholas (twice), all depicted with schoolmates in front of a teacher with a rod in the beginning of the thirteenth century (ill. 139). But it is also closely related to the depiction of a school in the Liberal Arts rose window in Laon cathedral from the end of the twelfth century. There, Grammar (see Chapter 6) is characterized as a (female) teacher, with a rod and two pupils in front, one with a double writing tablet. What we have stumbled across is a stereotypical depiction of a school within French stained-glass

112 Beer 1965: 159.

113 Vanden Bemden 1981: 203-206, 209 and 212.

114 *CMVA* 1986: 119-120.

ill. 139. *St. Nicholas at school, detail of window in Chartres cathedral, early thirteenth century.*
© Author.



art, consisting of a teacher with a rod and at his (or her) feet two or more pupils with reading or writing material. It does not seem to matter for which context a school scene was needed; this scheme was applicable in different cases.

Saints and their classmates

The much more elaborate depiction of St. Nicholas at school in a 1533 lead-glazed window in the parish church of Notre-Dame-des-Marais in La Ferté-Bernard (Sarthe region, France) represents the ‘second type’ described above. The window, showing twelve scenes from the life of St. Nicholas, was rebuilt after damage to the bay the glass was originally in; that is why the present sequence is illogical, with some of the famous miracles at the top, and the school scene underneath. This school scene (ill. 140) shows Nicholas, indicated by a halo, in vivid blue tunic, red

ill. 140. *St. Nicholas at school, window in Church of Notre-Dame-des-Marais in La Ferté Bernard, 1533.* © Author.





*Foy at school,
window with
story in St. Foy's
Conches-en-
540-1545.*

with a large rod
lose and wears a
s pointing in it
one seated bent
ther in purple.
n is sitting and
n pinafore and
e pink columns

g - me treatment in stained glass. The education of St. Foy, depicted in c.1540-1545 by Romain Burron as part of a window with scenes from her life in the church dedicated to her in Conches-en-Ouche, takes place in a large neo-classical building, with columns and arches, opened windows and a stove decorated with a classical-style relief (ill. 141). The female saint is standing before a (male) teacher who holds a rod and is speaking; the girl, her hands raised, has semi-long blond hair and is wearing a dark-yellow dress. In the classroom there are a further eight pupils, both male and female, all dressed colourfully, some with berets, and one with a 'marbles bag' on

115 *CVMA* 1981: 238 ; a similar scene is in the Bedford Breviary: Paris, ms lat 17294, f 459v.



ill. 142. *St. Malo found asleep by his master and classmates, Rouen, early sixteenth century. Rouen, Archives of the Seine, ms G 6873. Photo taken from: D'Haenens 1986: 189.*



ill. 143. *St. John of Damascus teaching, window in Milan cathedral, before 1438. Photo taken from: Pirina 1986: 254.*

his belt. Some of them are reading together, sexes mixed; they all sit on benches with cushions, and even the footstool on which Foy sat is visible.¹¹⁶

Sometimes, the specific rendering of school in the *vita* of a saint could lead to another kind of episode of school life. The best example of this phenomenon is an illustration of the life of St. Malo (Maclou) in a sixteenth-century charter from Rouen (ill. 142).¹¹⁷ The *vita* tells us that the saint as a child had walked away from school into the countryside and had fallen asleep on a small island, when his master accompanied by his classmates went to look for him. The miniature illustrates the moment when the master, at the saint's request, gives the psalter to him. Like the saint, the schoolmates all carry *perpendicula* or double writing cases on their belts and wear low shoes, hose, tunic and beret. In the background is the city of Rouen; Malo had wandered off quite a way from his school. The story is an allusion to the mythical journey of Malo with his master St. Brendan, where he went ashore and conducted mass on a whale he took for an island.¹¹⁸

The theme was not limited to France either. The window illustrating the life of San Giovanni Damasceno (St. John of Damascus) in the Duomo of Milan dating from before 1438 contains two depictions of schools. One shows the young saint saying his lesson in front of his teacher, the monk Cosma, both of them holding books. Five more boys are seated on the steps around them, holding books as well, and some more books are on a shelf next to the master's chair. The other window panel shows the saint as a grown and educated man, teaching three boys to write (ill. 143) in turn. The boy on the right, on whose shoulder Giovanni placed his hand, is writing the first characters, A and B, on a sheet rolled open on his writing board, with a white pen with a black point. The inscription underneath

116 CVMA 2001: 75, 129-130.

117 Rouen, Archives départementales de la Seine Maritime, inv.no. G.6873 (*Chartrier de Saint-Maclou*), see: D'Haenens 1986: 189.

118 D'Haenens 1986: 189.



ill. 144. *St. Firmin before the teacher, detail of sculpture on ambulatory of Amiens cathedral, c.1530.*
© Author.

reads ‘In scholis instruit pueros legere et scribere atque philosophari’ (In school he instructed children in reading, writing and philosophy). Both scenes feature elaborate Renaissance architecture and typical Italian clothes. In this case, it is stressed not only that the saint received an education, but that he returned to school as a teacher, to pass on his knowledge as well.¹¹⁹

Even more detailed than Foy’s is the school Saint Firmin of Amiens is attending in a series of polychromed sculptures from around 1530 in the ambulatory in Amiens cathedral. There, the locally important martyr St. Firmin (the first bishop of Amiens in the third century AD) is shown receiving his education from the aptly named St. Honeste, as the legend tells. This is depicted as a very elaborate mixed school scene (ill. 144 & cover ill.). The master is in the middle, with the young saint before him. On both sides of this scene children are being taken to school: a boy by his father to the left, a girl (with a basket at her arm, see also § 2.5) by a cripple to the right. Two more boys sit reading before the legs of the master’s chair, while a final two are reading from one book together at the bottom of the scene. The scene is very detailed: St. Firmin and one of the boys at the bottom have writing cases hanging from their belts, books are on a shelf above the teacher’s head and all kinds of hats, cloaks, bags and shoes are present.

There is no unambiguous explanation for why the depiction of the simple statement ‘the saint received an education’ became so elaborated and detailed at this point. It may be due to differences in materials, technique and taste, probably under the influence of Northern-style art. What is more interesting is the question

¹¹⁹ Pirina 1986: 227, 245, 254.

ill. 145. *St. Roch at school*, woodcut, Antwerp (Master of St. Roch), c.1525. Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, Prints & Drawings, inv.no. WA1863.3415.2.
© Ashmolean Museum.



whether this artistic difference reflects a real change in school practice – are there more objects depicted because the artists liked details or because more were actually used in class by then? The depiction of the education of St. Lambert in Liège Cathedral discussed above shows that the decision to depict more objects is not a necessary one, and that simple scenes were still depicted in the sixteenth century.

The second of a series of 19 large-format woodcuts illustrating the life of St. Roch¹²⁰ shows him at school (ill. 145), the first showing his birth. These woodcuts were produced around 1525 in the Southern Netherlands, probably in Antwerp. Roch was one of the most popular late-medieval saints, because he was a patron against the plague, and most scenes of his life picture him involved in caring for plague victims. The school scene merely shows the future saint as a very restrained pupil, as a visual counterpart of the remarks in his written *vita* that he was much more restrained at twelve than others his age.¹²¹ Because this moment is stressed in the story, we can safely assume that Roch is meant to be twelve years old in this scene. He stands before the master, who is seated and wearing a beret; he has one arm wrapped around the child and holds a book with the other. Roch is pointing with his index finger in the book, indicating that he is reading from it. Behind them, five other pupils are in the room, three on benches and two standing, all reading and interacting with each other.

It seems that just a brief notice of education in the written or orally transmitted life of a saint was enough to inspire a school scene, especially when a whole series of depictions was devoted to the life cycle, as in the above-mentioned prints of St. Roch. Within series of scenes from the life of a saint, the school scene has a clear

¹²⁰ Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, legacy Francis Douce, see: Nijhoff 1933: pl. 266, no. 2; also: Campbell Dodgson 1934.

¹²¹ Schmitz-Eichhoff 1977: 15.

tradition. It became a *topos*, but one that gives away a general notion about how wisdom was gained: it was rooted in education, and education was normally to be found in a school outside the house, shared with a teacher and other children – even if you were Jesus himself.

4.4 Learning in egodocuments

Autobiographies of schooldays

Not only the official biographies of the saintly and wise contained school episodes. Also in autobiographical documents like diaries, letters and travel reports, most common from the sixteenth century onwards, those describing their own lives usually included references to their education. Unfortunately, little space is usually devoted to any schooling before university, and even less to the daily life or material culture of it. An extraordinary material detail is mentioned by Buchelius, an important sixteenth-century Dutch scholar, in his diary about the year 1571, where he notes that in February, just before his sixth birthday, he started learning the alphabet, to which end a tablet was tied around his waist, so he could see the characters constantly:

‘Annus 1571. Februarius.

Hoc tempore primas litterulas discere coepi, puer quinquennis, eaeque, ut semper ante oculos haberem et melius memoriae inherent, tabulis grandiusculae erant inscriptae, quas continuo cingulo firmatas circumferebam’.¹²²

(The year 1571. February. At this time I started to learn the first characters, a boy of five, and to always have them before my eyes and so to have them stick in my memory better, they were inscribed in capitals on a tablet, that I continuously carried around).

This passage is supported by the images of alphabet boards that could always be carried by a ribbon or belt through a hole in the handle, so they were indeed ‘fastened’ to the child. It also brings to mind a tablet and a belt with the alphabet on it, both given by a teacher and a monk successively to the small Lubin (later a saint) so that he could learn the alphabet, as is depicted in a window of Chartres cathedral.¹²³ For the small Buchelius, learning the alphabet took the shape of pre-schooling at home; only a year later, when he was six-and-a-half, does he mention in his diary going to an under-school in Utrecht.

The Schwarz costume books

None of these autobiographical documents have illustrations, apart from perhaps a portrait of their writer on the title page. That is one of the reasons why the two *Trachtenbücher* (Costume books) produced by Matthäus Schwarz and his son Veit Konrad Schwarz in c.1520 and c.1550 are extraordinary. In these volumes, the illustrations are dominant, which is logical, as the main goal of these books is to show costumes. As the two books hold some ten scenes of school life between them, they are unrivalled sources for an impression of daily life at school in the sixteenth century. They have been used by scholars before, but essentially as separate illustrations – usually taken from the faithful sixteenth-century copy of Matthäus’s book in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France¹²⁴ – enlivening exposés about children or school in the Middle Ages.¹²⁵

The *Schwarzschen Trachtenbücher* are kept in the Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum in Braunschweig (Northern Germany). Matthäus’s book is small, measu-

122 Arnoldus Buchelius, *Commentarius rerum quotidianarum* [...], Utrecht, University Library, ms 798, part I, f 93r, published by Brom and Van Langeraad 1907: 23, see: Langereis 2001: 65; I thank Sandra Langereis for bringing this passage and diary to my attention.

123 Window with the life of St. Lubin, bay 45, dated 1205-1215; the reason to produce the alphabet belt can be read in the written vita of St. Lubin: ‘Qui cum non haberet codicis aut tabularum supplementum, prout potuit, apices in cingulo scripsit’ (Because he [the monk Nigel] had no spare books or tablets, to give him, he wrote the characters on a belt). Of course, Lubin’s belt was kept as a relic in the treasury of the Chartres chapter; see: Manhes-Deremble 1993: 103, note 376-377 and fig. 37.

124 Usually the copy is used for reproduction, although the original is richer (and the original!), but it is much easier to get access to the copy, and colour illustrations from the originals cost an extreme amount of money. That must be why Matthäus’s volume is quoted more than Veit Konrad’s: from an iconographical point of view Veit’s is more interesting, but there is no copy of the latter. I am grateful to keeper Dr. Döring of the Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, for allowing me exceptional access to both original manuscripts in August 2004.

125 For instance: Arnold 1980: 72, 77; Riché and Alexandre-Bidon 1994: 40, 53, 81, 85, 136, 137, 141, 192; Den Hartog 1997: 239, 240; Willemsen 1998: 73, 100, 104, 105, 175.

ill. 146. *Learning to write at home, in the Trachtenbuch of Matthäus Schwarz. Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, ms H.27 no. 67a. © HAUM.*



ring 16 x 10 cms, while that of his son Veit Konrad – who must have got the idea from his father – is bigger, 23.2 x 16.2 cms. They both carry the inventory number H.27, sometimes with the addition No. 67a for Matthäus's volume and No. 51 for Veit Konrad's. As stated, there is a contemporary sixteenth-century copy of only Matthäus's book in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (ms Allemand 211, 18 x 11 cms); the illustrations are copied faithfully, but here and there text has been changed, left out or added as extra explanation. A page with two images missing from the original (scenes 11 and 12) can partly be reconstructed from the copy (there f 6v). A facsimile in black-and-white with commentary was published in 1963.¹²⁶

The copy states that the costume book was written and painted by Matthäus Schwarz single-handedly,¹²⁷ and indeed the style and handwriting are constant in both the original and the copy. Matthäus started his costume book in c.1520, when first he retrospectively filled the book with portraits of his parents and the episodes from his own life starting with his birth in 1497 (f 7, scene 1) up till c.1520. After that, he kept adding his costumes until 1560. Every scene in the book is numbered on top followed by a heading of varying length in a frame. Sometimes further explanatory texts were written in the image; it is clear that the paintings were made first and the text added later. Underneath each picture are the date and the age of Matthäus at the time. On folio 127, a separate painted page has been attached crosswise into the book, showing an old Matthäus, on his sickbed, talking to his three children standing next to the bed, inscribed with their names and ages. The second son, inscribed 'Veitli 6 iar alt' (small Veit, six years old) would become the author of the second costume book.

The education of Matthäus starts with an episode of self-teaching at home when he was five – same age and setting as Buchelius described above – that is depicted on folio 10 (ill. 146). The text reads:

'Anno 1502 adi 18 Junius als mein Mütter starb; (On 18 June 1502 when my mother died;
da lernet ich das a.b.c.[...] aber wie in ein Traum.' I learned the alphabet, but like in a dream)

The inscription underneath shows he was five year and four months old then. He is in a room, seated on a low and small (children's) chair in a bundle of light that falls in through a window. He is wearing a pale-grey felt hat, a long black tunic – he is in mourning – and hose in a linear pattern of red, white, beige and black. His feet are in black shoes, one of them resting on a red school sack that is lying on the floor. In his lap is a red book or tablet with a white sheet, while he holds a long gold-coloured writing peg or pen in his right hand; he is writing characters and busy finishing the O; the preceding A up till N can already be read. In the back of the room we see a water jug in a niche, while a doorway allows a view into a bedroom.

After this episode, two pages have gone missing. One of them may have held a depiction of the boy taken to the local school, as that is the theme chosen by Matthäus's son for his own book (see below) – but this page is also missing from the copy, so we do not know. The other page certainly held a depiction of Matthäus being taken to grammar school, because that one is known from the copy in Paris, where it is on folio 6v (ill. 147). The text explains:

'Adi imo Septemb~r 1505 schickt man mich
aüff Leijdenhaim ünter die rüt; läut des büchs
am 10. blat. 6. cap: in dieser gestalt in ajchen

(In September 1505, I was sent to
Leidenheim under the rod, says the book
on page 10 chapter 6: dressed like this in

¹²⁶ Fink 1963.

¹²⁷ 'Costumes portés par Matthieu Schwarz, bourgeois d'Augsbourg, depuis le 20 Février 1497, jour de sa naissance, jusqu'en 1560, avec un texte explicatif en allemand. Ce volume a été écrit et peint de la propre main de Matthieu Schwarz', on the frontispice of ms Allemand 211 of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris (studied in September 2005).



ill. 147 *Taken to school in the city, in the copy of the Trachtenbuch of Matthäus Schwarz. Paris, National Library of France, ms Allemand 211, f 6v. © BNF.*

ill. 148. *Skippping school, in the copy of the Trachtenbuch of Matthäus Schwarz. Paris, National Library of France, ms Allemand 211, f 7r. © BNF.*

farb ünd greu, dan contz von der Rojen het gar ein bejen strick aüss mir gezorgen; Ich sprang beij 2 meilen von Augspürg vom wagen und wollte davon lauffen, aber mein pfaff ünd seine magt die erwischen mich wieder und banden mich im bzögen. 8 Jar 6 Monet 8 Tag alt.

The eight-year-old is shown in the back of the wagon made of wood and reed, sitting behind the backs of his tutor in grey wearing a beret and that of his tutor's wife in pink with a headscarf and a broad-brimmed hat. A span of horses is being driven by a man in a red tunic carrying purse and sheath, pulling the wagon through the countryside, passing a cowherd and his herd, snow-capped mountains in the distance. Matthäus is wearing a grey cloak with a pale green collar, and a dark red hat over a dark grey hood.

A year later, Matthäus ran away from his tutor again; he begged and spent time with a shepherd boy. He explains that he ran away because he was beaten disproportionately:



pale and grey, when count Von der Rojen had already beaten the hell out of me; I jumped off the wagon 2 miles from Augsburg and tried to run away, but my tutor and his wife caught me and tied me to the bar. 8 years, 6 months, 8 days old.)

‘Im 1506. im Mayen und Junius lief ich meinem pfaffen weg zu Haidenhaim laut ‘der welt lauf’ a carta 10 am 6. cap. Er schlieg mich zu hart. Ich sang um das brot zu Hechstot, Gundlfing, Schnaiten, Boley etc. und fayltz dan mit den hürtenbüben, das sy mich mit inen lisen hueten die khue. 8. Jar und bey 4. monet.’

(May and June 1506 I ran away from my tutor at Haidenhaim states ‘the way of the world’ on page 10 in chapter 6. He beat me too hard. I sang for my bread in Hechstot, Gundlfing, Schnaiten, Boley etc. and negotiated with the cowherd’s boy, to let me guard the cows with him. 8 years and about 4 months.)

On the side, there was a further explanation of how badly he was treated, and how he got his revenge. It was erased later, but can be reconstructed nearly fully from the traces:

‘Das ich meinem pfaffen von Haidenhaim weglief, was die ursach, das er mich in [...] weiß geschlagen und schier in der Brentz ertrenckt hat. Da überkam ich sein whör und gueng unter der bredig in sein garten und hacket im al seine junge krautköpf ab und stecket darauf die whör ins ertreich und luef davon.’

(The reason I left my tutor at Haidenhaim was that he beat me half dead in [...] and almost drowned me in the Brentz river. Then I got his sword and during sermon went in his garden and hacked all the young cabbage heads off, stuck the sword in the ground and walked away.)

In this depiction, Matthäus is shown twice (ill. 148, from the copy in Paris). Once in the right top corner he is ‘singing for his bread’; he holds up his cloak to a woman throwing a brown bag from a window. The second time he is in the foreground together with the cowherd boy, behind a herd of cows. In both cases he is wearing a grey cloak with a green collar and a brown beret, carrying a double black writing case from his leather belt and a book covered in red, which in the second scene is lying beside him in the grass. The rim of his cloak is frayed, his shoes are worn and he does not wear any trousers. He is feeding a mouse to a bird of prey. The cowherd boy is dressed differently and does not have any school equipment.

On folio 14 Matthäus is 11 years old and at the Latin school in Augsburg again; he explains that his father bought him shorter, wider cloaks then, and he has depicted the games he played after school:

‘28. Febrer 1508 kam ich wider gen Aug~. da klaitt uns mein vatter all disergstalt, der brieder vil, und dz war mein kurtzweil so ich aüs der schül kam, läüt der welt laf auf 10 am 7. cap. 11 jar 8 tag allt.’

(February 28, 1508 I came back to Augsburg. Then my father dressed us in this wider cut, and this was my play when I came from school, says ‘the way of the world’ on page 10 in chapter 7. 11 years and 8 days old.)

Matthäus is shown three times at play in a square between houses that may well depict the schoolyard or a churchyard close to his school. He is wearing a short, navy-green cloak with a broad collar and opening sleeves showing white. His hose is of the same colour as his cloak, his shoes ankle-high and black. He carries a red schoolbag with the shoulder strap crossing his chest and under that a leather double writing case on a black sling carried crosswise too. In the back, at the (school) door, he is shown with a songbird on his left hand and some feathers in his right. In the

middle, he is kneeling on the ground playing with marbles or chestnuts. In the foreground, he is rolling his hoop made of twigs, wrapped in four places, driving it with a stick with a blunt end that he holds in his right hand. To the right, a small stand can be seen, selling silvery- and gold-coloured things.

A year later, in 1509, Matthäus was attending school in St. Moritz, and wanted to become a monk; his play after school now involved an altar set – a unique depiction:

<p>‘Im 1509. im summer klaitt uns aber mein vatter durchaus, wie hie stett. Da was ich ein schüler zü Sant Moritzen, wolt ein münch zü Sant Ulrich werden. Mein khurtzweil was mit altargmel und gmacht halgen laut ‘die welt lauf’ auf 10 am 7. cap. 12 jar ünd beij 4 monat.’</p>	<p>(In the summer of 1509 my father usually dressed us as depicted here. I was a pupil at St. Moritz then, wanted to become a monk at St. Ulrich. My play was with a small altarpiece and sculpted saints, says ‘the way of the world’ at 10 in chapter 7. 12 years and around 4 months.)</p>
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In this depiction, Matthäus, still a schoolboy, is wearing a bag, writing case and a brown beret as seen earlier. He is dressed in a yellow cloak, with black tunic, blue hose and black shoes underneath. He seems to be in his bedroom, as bed, bench, chamber pot and a circular glazed window can be seen. There, a gold-coloured altarpiece showing the Virgin and Child flanked by two saints has been placed on a table covered in white cloth. Before the altar there are two gold-coloured chandeliers and a gold-coloured chalice, paten, and ciborium, with in between two grey (pewter?) jugs and and a miniature reliquary – objects like these, in pewter, have been excavated in the Netherlands, showing that this depiction may be unique, but the game was not¹²⁸ – while an altar bell is standing on the floor. Matthäus is depicted in the action of playing mass, holding out a candle with a gold-coloured flame at the end and a white cloth with gold stripes. Over his shoulder he carries the black writing case and red school bag, partly covered by a long flap of his yellow cloak.

Two episodes show Matthäus in his last phase of schooling. In the first (folio 16) he is shown closing the school door behind him (see ill. 265), while in the second (folio 17) he is trampling his school equipment. In the first of these, he is in the highest class (‘in primo partem’) at St. Moritz, and wise enough to his taste:

<p>‘1510 im Sümmer klait mich aber mei~ Vatter dieser g~stallt: da was ich in primo partem zu~ Sant Morizen laüt der weltd laüff am 10 blat 7. capitl. was in meynen Sijnn glert. 13 Jar und beij 4 monet.’</p>	<p>(In the summer of 1510 my father dressed me like this: then I was in the first class at St. Moritz states ‘the way of the world’ at page 10 chapter 7. I had learned enough to my taste. 13 years and almost 4 months.)</p>
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Matthäus wears black shoes put in wooden pattens with high soles and black hose and a large blue cloak with black stripes alongside its rims; the broad collar shows that underneath he is wearing a black jerkin fastened with a button or badge over a white shirt with a standing collar. At his side the sleeve of his cloak partly covers a white school sack, gathered shut at the top, on which a writing case is balancing. On his head he wears a brown beret.

This image is interesting not only because of the pupil but also because we can be sure that a school is being depicted: the painting bears the words, ‘das ist die Schül

128 See: Willemsen 1998: 102-103 and ill. 72; for the game see also: Post 1995.



ill. 149. *Trampling of school sack, in the sixteenth-century copy of the Trachtenbuch of Matthäus Schwarz. Paris, National Library of France, ms Allemand 211, f 9r. © BNF.*

so' (This is the school). Apart from the simple wooden door with horizontal and vertical metal grips, the grey walls and grey flags on the floor, there is a view into a church in the back, where arches, cloth-covered seats and an altar piece can be seen. This means the school was in a corridor attached to the church, maybe a cloister.

In the second of these episodes, Matthäus is shown in the act of 'throwing the school sack away', meant not only metaphorically as ending school, but also taken literally, as he is shown standing on his school sack with the contents thrown out (ill. 149).

'Im ausgenden 1510 warf ich den Schulsack wegg. Meyne Sinn stonden mir nur In frembde land: was diser gstalt gern beklaitt. 14 Jar minder 2 monet.'

(At the end of 1510 I threw the school-sack away. My thoughts were only in far away countries. This image shows that clearly. 14 years minus 2 months.)

The extra information scribbled onto the side wall of the school is interesting for us:

‘Da fieng ich an zü rechordiren, müst all ding
beschriben werden, laut dös büchs 9. cap. 12. blat
anzaigt.’ (Then I started to keep records,
everything should be described, says the
book in chapter 9 on page 12 as shown.)

The recent graduate (or rather: the drop-out) is depicted outside a grey (school) building, on a marble floor inside a low wall. The allusion in the text to the ‘far away places’ to which his mind is wandering must be the reason a wide landscape view is presented, with mountains and a big city in the distance. Matthäus is dressed in a grey and green cloak fastened at the shoulder, red beret, and red hose put into black instep shoes. Both feet are on the large, white school sack with black sling thrown onto the floor, his right foot touching a book covered in black sticking out of it. Next to the bag is the double writing case and two sheets of paper, one folded and one with some text on it.

In the scene (on page 18) following him leaving school at the age of 14, we encounter Matthäus as a servant to his father. Although his clothing has not changed that much, and he is still wearing beret, cloak and hose, his attributes have changed significantly: no schoolbag, writing case or playthings, but sword, dagger and barrel instead; he is not a schoolboy anymore.

ill. 150. Taken to
school in the village, in
the Trachtenbuch of
Veit Konrad Schwarz.
Braunschweig, Herzog
Anton Ulrich-Museum,
ms H.27 no. 51. Photo
taken from:
Fink 1963: 197.



At play behind the school

Veit Konrad, said to be six years old in 1541 when his father Matthäus painted him, left a costume book of his own. Some of the scenes are quite similar to those in Matthäus' book, and both the hand of drawing and the handwriting are very much alike. It is possible that Matthäus made the book for his son, or at least started it, painting the charming intimate scenes of early childhood on the first pages. But the scenes depicting his dress after his father's death c.1560 must be by the son's hand. Veit Konrad says in his 'Vorrede' (preface) that he was inspired by his father's book – and he must have been down to the very details – but that the dresses shown there were old-fashioned now, and that therefore he made a new one.¹²⁹

The first three scenes cover the first years of Veit's life at home, showing him cradled and nursed, learning to walk and dress himself, handling a rattle and a hobby-horse, breaking his toys, and twirling a butterfly on a string.¹³⁰ Then, on folio 9, his first steps in education are depicted. Here we see Veit Konrad, just over five years old by then, being taken to the Latin school in Augsburg by his nanny. The woman carries a basket full of pretzels on her head and holds the boy by the hand; we see them from the back. Veit is dressed in a black short cloak, knickerbockers and hose, black shoes and a black beret. Over his shoulder he carries a red school bag on a pale grey sling. They are walking towards an arched door in a building in the middle of town (ill. 150).

The text reads:

'Adi ultimo Februario 1547 muest ich in die lateinische schuel trumpfen, ich tetts gern oder nit. Dieweil ich aber ein ernst sach, das nit andersdaram was, dann das ich in die schuel muest, da erzaigt ich mich gleich auch willig und gueng gen. Unser Frauen zum Johannes Buschen in die schuel. Der hett dißmals 110 bueben, die latein solten lernen. Ich gab zum einstand eim yeden ein brötzen. Da ward ich vom preceptor, seinem weib und auch den bueben, in suma von yederman mit heelen und gueten Worten empfangen. Ja, da stuend mein sach ain 8 oder 14 tag wol; ich wollt kain schuel versaumen. Da aber die zeit furuber was, da sprach man mir seltzam zue, also das ich nit ful lust mer in die schuel hett, stellet mich aber nit dergeleichen. Meines alters 5 jar 4 monat.'

(The last day of February 1547 I had to go to the Latin school, whether I liked it or not. As I saw clearly that there was no other way, than to go to school, then I was willing and went gladly to the school of Johannes Busch at the church of Our Lady. At that time it held 110 boys who had to learn Latin. For my entrance I gave everyone a roll. I was accepted by the headmaster, his wife and the boys as well, by everyone, with ease and good words. Yes, I was doing good for 8 or 14 days, did not miss a day of school. When time went on, people did not talk to me much, so I did not feel like school anymore, but I did not act like it. My age 5 years and 4 months.)

Inside the drawing is another comment on the boy's feelings about his first school day:

'Da gueng er mit schweren hertzen dahin in die schuel.'

(There he went to school with a heavy heart.)

The next two episodes depict the games he used to play in the schoolyard, first the summer joy and next the winter amusement. On folio 10 (ill. 151) Veit, eight-

¹²⁹ Fink 1963: 187.

¹³⁰ Fink 1963: 190-195, for the toys see: Willemsen 1998: 100 and 73 (ills. 68 and 34).

Das 18 vnd 19 Jar bin ich mit vil Inn die schuel gangen oder
aus dem hause kumen als verhinderung meiner gewaltigen krankheit
die ich gehabt hab. lauts kinderbuchlein 20. Aber im 20. Jar ich
widerumb zu meinem preceptor. der het sein schuel dimal bei Sant
martin abas im maig. da was diu mein gewonliche kaidung wie
knechten. So was auch diu mein freud. wann ich aus der schuel kam
oder hinder die schuel gieng. mit vogel. trieben. fluckern. hurnau.
vns treiben. vnd dergleichen freuden meer, wie knechten ain wenig
anzeigt ist.





ill. 152. Games played in winter, in the Trachtenbuch of Veit Konrad Schwarz. Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, ms H.27 no. 51. Photo taken from: Fink 1963: 201.

LEFT PAGE:

ill. 151. Games played in the schoolyard, in the Trachtenbuch of Veit Konrad Schwarz. Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, ms H.27 no. 51. © HAUM.

and-a-half years old, is depicted six times, all dressed the same, in a short vivid red cloak, buttoned up at the front and tied with a girdle, white trousers and hose, black instep shoes and a black plaited hat with a broad rim. Over his shoulder is a black school sack with a grey sling and from his belt a leather double writing case dangles on his left hip. In the foreground he poses with a hoop and is seen in the back throwing his spinning top to drive other tops from a circle drawn on the ground. Behind he is seen shooting marbles, holding a blue-and-yellow songbird, striking a tip-cat, and throwing knucklebones (against the wall). The games have expressions inscribed next to them, while the text explains the situation:

‘Das 1548. und 1549. Jar bin ich nit vil inn die schuell ganggen oder aus dem haus kumen, aus verhinderung meiner gwalltigen krackheite die ich gehabt hab lauts kinderbuchlins auf 10. Aber im 1550 kam ich widerumb zue meinem preceptor, der hett sein schuell dissmaal bei Sant Martin, was in mayo, da wass diss mein gewonnlichen klaidung wie hirunder, so was auch diss mein freud wann ich aus der Schuel kam, oder hinder die schuell giengg, mit vögl, triblen, kluckern, hurnaussen, raifftreiben unnd dergleichen freuden meer, wie hirunden ain wienig anzaigt ist. Meines alters 8½ jar’

(In 1548 and 1549 I have not been to school or out of the house often, because of the major illness that I had, as the childhood book states on page 10. But in 1550 I returned to my tutor, who had his school at St. Martin's this time, it was in May, and this was my usual dress as shown beneath, and this was my play when I came from school or went behind the school, with birds, tipcats, marbles, throwing, spinning hoops and more games like that, as has partly been drawn beneath. My age 8½).

ill. 153. *Working as a clerk, in the Trachtenbuch of Veit Konrad Schwarz. Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, ms H.27 no. 51. Photo taken from: Fink 1963: 205.*



On folio 11, the games he played in winter haven been depicted (ill. 152). Veit Konrad is depicted several times, with some school friends. He is sitting on a wooden sledge pulled with a rope, in red hose, blue cloak with white collar, blue round hat and carrying a black bag. One of the other boys depicted wears green hose with red trousers and a black jerkin and beret, another one brown hose with a yellow tunic and black round hat, a third one yellow-brown hose with brown-black knickerbockers, a black jerkin and black round hat. Apart from the sledging, they are shown throwing snowballs in the background.

‘Anno 1551 im winter ging ich in die theutsch schuel zum Johann Burtzell, diser zeit im koltergeßlin wonnhafft, das ich sollt lernen lesen, schreiben und rechnen. Das thet ich aufs allerschlechtest, dann die boßhait lag mir mer im sin dann die lernung, alls das ich fantasiert, was ich nach der schuel aursrichten wollt: ob ich wollt schleifen, schneballen, im schlitten faren, oder ob ich ainem ain kampf wollt aufbieten, der mich etwa gögen meinen schuelmeister boßhait oder anders halben dargöben hett. Da was mein kladung, wie unden anzaigt. Meines alters 10 jar und bey 2 monat.’

(In the winter of 1551 I went to the German school of Johann Burtzell, living in a dormitory this time, to learn to read, write and do maths. I did that in the worst way, as unrest was closer to me than learning, and I fantasized what I would do after school: if I would go sledging, throw snowballs, skate, or if I would pick a fight with someone, who had put the anger of my schoolmaster against me or in another way put me against him. Then my dress was, as shown beneath. My age 10 years and around 2 months.)

Next to the fight in the background, there is another reference to the provocation:

‘Ey, du schelm, du has gmacht, das mir der
preceptor hat abkörret!’

‘Hey, you rascal, you made the
headmaster ill-treat me!’

These are the only school life scenes in Veit’s costume book. On folio 12 he is shown playing the lute, while – still interesting for our subject – on folio 13 he is working as a clerk, at the age of 12-13 (ill. 153). He is wearing smart clothes and has combed his hair; on the table his tools for writing are exposed (pens, written sheets and a pewter inkstand), while books lay open on the cabinet and papers have been put behind a red ribbon. His somewhat short and broken school career still seems to have paid off.

THE RIGHT TIME FOR EDUCATION

5.1 School as a phase in life

Most school scenes in Chapter 4 are easily recognizable as such. However, a scene of a teacher instructing or punishing pupils is also a fixed part of a number of series of illustrations: the ages of man, the months of the year, and the seven planets. The reason that a lesson or school is portrayed here may need some explanation now, but its inclusion in the series is standard and makes these images significant for understanding how people in this period looked upon education. There is an extensive iconographical context to these images, that betrays the late-medieval and early modern preoccupation with the course of life being well organized by nature into a fixed set of stages, each with its own character and its appropriate activities. In other words: in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, people believed strongly that there was a time for everything. The schemes of things made it easily predictable who were most suited for learning, and teaching, and when that was best done.

School on misericords

In the cathedral of St. Salvator in Bruges, one of the misericords in the choir stalls shows a school scene (see ill. 158): a teacher seated in a chair with a boy kneeling before him and another boy sitting behind. Both boys are holding books, the



ill. 154. *School scene, misericord NB 11 in Rouen cathedral.*
© Author.



ill. 155. *Pupil birched by teacher. Misericord in Sherborne Abbey, after 1436. Photo taken from: Remnant 1969: Plate 20b.*

ill. 156. *Pupil birched by teacher, armrest in Cathedral of St. Bertrand de Comminges, sixteenth century. Photo taken from: www.cathedrale-saint-bertrand.org.*



teacher wears doctor's robes and a beret. The misericord is on the northern side of the choir, in the upper layer of stalls. The woodwork for the choir was made in Bruges in 1478.

A close parallel for this misericord is known from Rouen cathedral, where the teacher holds a birch rod (ill. 154); the similarities in style can at least partly be explained by the involvement of Flemish sculptors in the woodwork at Rouen.¹ A master teaching from books is depicted on one of the stalls of Auxerre Cathedral;² his beret is very prominent, and in front of him we see a boy with curly hair reading from an open book, while two more pupils are reading together behind his back.

¹ Billiet and Block 2001: 148; Block 2003: 393.

² Kraus and Kraus 1986: 75 (Fig. 68).

François Garnier has suggested that this is a portrait of a specific master: Jacques Amyot, educator of the children of King Henry II and of the dukes of Orléans and Anjou.³ This is, of course, possible, but cannot be proven, as nothing in this depiction is significantly different from other school scenes on misericords, especially not the two boys in fancy clothes on the left, that Garnier interprets as a prince receiving a present; this group is very similar to those in, for instance, the sculpted depiction of a school on the choir screen in Amiens Cathedral (see ill. 144).

In England the four misericords with school scenes known all show a teacher punishing a pupil, surrounded by other pupils. They are present in St. Botolph in Boston,⁴ Norwich Cathedral,⁵ Sherborne Abbey⁶ and the chapel of Henry VII added to Westminster Abbey in 1519.⁷ The one in Sherborne Abbey (ill. 155) is the most elaborate, with the master right under the seat, with a large birch rod raised and a boy – bare buttocks exposed – across his knees. The punished boy holds a book in his outstretched left hand. On the edges of the misericord, there is a group of two boys reading to the left, and a boy with a scroll to the right.⁸

Another misericord with a school scene is in Zamora cathedral in Spain, where the choir stalls were executed in 1502.⁹ Here, the teacher holds a paddle, and both boys look towards him. In the same choir, there is also a parody of this scene, for on another misericord a teacher is being punished by two school boys, one holding his clothes down, the other using the rod on the master's bare buttocks. As this type of punishment is typical for school (see § 4.2) and all three can be identified by the hats they also wear in the school scene, this scene must have led to easy laughter. As the Zamora stalls were sculpted by artists from Flanders – Mathijs van Holland and Giralte de Bruselas are documented to have been working on them¹⁰ – it is unsurprising that the execution of these is similar to the misericords in Bruges.

Although most frequently found on misericords, the theme of school punishment occurs on other parts of wooden stalls as well. The birching of a school boy by his teacher is seen again on the armrest of the carved choir of the church of Saint-Juste in Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges (France). This elegant carving from the sixteenth century (ill. 156) shows the master in gown and beret, with his right hand raised holding the birch rod, standing against the vertical part of the armrest. The boy is before him, his head in the teacher's lap, his bare buttocks turned towards the viewer. A slight variation, much less convincing, and this time with the child sitting before the master with his head raised is on one of the other armrests in this choir. Another armrest with a teacher with rod and a pupil is in Amiens cathedral.

The ages of man

In Bruges, the misericord with the scene of education (ill. 158) may be more than a piece of fun. The misericord directly to the left shows a woman teaching a child to walk, using a triangular walking frame (ill. 157). The misericord under the stall directly to the right (ill. 159) shows a young man on horseback with a hunting falcon (the fourth shows an older man talking to a child). From this sequence, it is clear that these three misericords may illustrate the first three stages of life. This scheme, also called the 'ages of man' or 'steps of life', was very well known in the later Middle Ages, both in text and as separate images. It consists of a series of usually seven sets of years, personified by the typical activity of that life span. The first stage (*infantia*) is usually depicted as a newborn child or toddler, the second (*pueritia*) as a playing child, the third (*adolescentia*) as a falconer. Passing through a courting or wedding scene, a man counting his money, a man praying and a sick

3 Garnier 2000: 233-234 (fig. 1, misericord S 23).

4 See also: 'The misericords lecture' by Ayers Bagley in the 'Virtual Museum of Educational Iconics' at <http://education.umn.edu/edpa/Iconics/misericords> (June 2007).

5 Mottram s.a.: 80.

6 Bond 1910: 90.

7 Grössinger 1997: 169.

8 Grössinger 1997: 170 (ill. 266).

9 Block 2005: 52, Plate CXLV (misericord NB 14) and Plate CXLVI (misericord NWH 02).

10 Steppe 1973: 39.



ill. 157. *Child learning to walk, misericord in St. Saviour's Church in Bruges, 1478.*
© Author.

ill. 158. *School scene, misericord in St. Saviour's Church in Bruges, 1478.*
© Author.



man, the stages commonly end with a corpse. There are many variations to the scheme, with male and female versions, and a division into ten or twelve scenes as well. In just a few examples, the stage of 'pueritia' is translated into a school scene. In my opinion, the Bruges misericord is an example of this genre.

One of the possible executions of a scheme with the ages of life is in the form of a tree holding persons or roundels with the various stages, as in an Austrian mid-fifteenth century copy of Ulrich von Lilienfeld's *Concordantia caritatis*, now in New York (ill. 160). This manuscript contains on two pages a sketch for a tree with twelve ages of life. It is read as a wheel and clockwise, starting from the lower left with a childbed. The lower branches on the left hold the first stages, while the top of the tree holds the best ages of man, ending again in the lower branches but then on the right side, with the dead body in a coffin mirroring the mother and child. After the baby, the second personification is inscribed 'infans' and shown – as in Bruges – as a toddler with a walking device. The third personification is 'puer', shown as a school boy (see ill. 56). He is dressed in a long cloak, with a schoolbag over his shoulder. In his left hand, he is holding a writing tablet with a handle, to which he points with a pen in his right hand. This 'school tablet'¹¹ is most likely an alphabet board. The scroll reads: 'Amb[u]lo secur[us] du[m] vivo c[ri]mi[n]e purus' and originally belongs to the child learning how to walk. The schoolboy in this place is there due to some illustrator's deviation of the textual scheme. His appearance therefore was not based on words, but on convention. He does look very much like the autobiographical depiction of someone as a schoolchild as preserved in the slightly later *Costume Book* of Matthäus Schwarz (see § 4.4), with the schoolbag at his side.

Another copy of Von Lilienfeld's book made in Vienna in 1471 contains in the middle of a number of diagrams a similar tree with the ages of life, cut in two again and placed on f 216r and 217v – so not even together – where 'pueritia' is a similar boy standing next to a woman, inscribed 'puer' and originally equipped with the same banderole, of which now only 'ambulo securio du~ vivo c' remains, as the upper portion of the image has been cut off.¹² But the boy is dressed in a simple tunic and has no attributes, which means that the implication of a school got lost. In the upper part of the tree, 'adolescens' is depicted with an oversized spinning top, originally the attribute of a younger child, which underlines that much of the logic and subtlety became lost when the scheme was copied again and again.

¹¹ Sears 1986: 152.

¹² Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, ms nouv.acq.lat. 2129.



ill. 159. *Falconeer, misericord in St. Saviour's Church in Bruges, 1478.*
© Author.

ill. 160. *Tree of Life with 'puer' as schoolboy in Concordantia caritatis of Ulrich von Lilienfeld. New York, The Morgan Library, M.1045, f 258v.*
© Morgan Library.



iii. 161. Death and the
Ages of Man, Hans
Schäufelein, c.1517.
Berlin, National Graphic
Collection.
© KSK/Jörg P. Anders.



Information often got mixed up; the schoolchild and the youth with a mirror in the beautiful wheel diagram with the ages of life in the psalter of Robert de Lisle¹³ were also equipped with the wrong quotations. Here, 'pueritia' is shown with a pair of scales and his age is described as that of measuring ('etatem mensuro') in the matching inscription, written erroneously next to 'adolescencia' looking at himself in a mirror. This image refers to education as well, but more specifically to the 'weighing' of knowledge; the first part of the inscription reads 'numquam ero labilis' (I was unbalanced). As the wheel holds ten phases of seven years, the boy is depicted at seven, the age of reason, when a person would start education.

In the large 'arbor sapientiae' (Tree of Wisdom) in a manuscript of the *Virgiet de Solas*¹⁴ a school scene is provided with 'adolescens'. 'Puer' is a small undetermined boy here, while the falconer, traditionally depicting adolescence, is placed with 'iuvenis'. The school scene is traditional, with a seated teacher in cloak and beret, holding a rod, speaking to a boy in a hooded cloak holding an open book and the caption supplied is correct: 'In formans mores in me flor promit odores' (When learning virtues the flower in me begins to smell). Apparently, school could be

13 London, British Library, ms Arundel 83, part II, f 126v, early fourteenth century.

14 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, ms fr 9220.

seen as fit for the ‘puer’ as well as for the adolescent, and it was – and is – true that education covers both ages.

The phases of life, however constructed, would inevitably end in death, and they were often combined with a dance of death in art. As far as I know, this ‘Danse macabre’ or ‘Totentanz’ usually does not include a schoolchild being taken away by death; the child present is usually still in the cradle or identified as being a child by toys and play. A print by Hans Schäufelein of c.1517 showing Death and the ages (ill. 161) is an exception. Here, the first five ages are personified as a baby in a child’s chair, a toddler with a walking frame, playful children on hobby-horses, boys spinning tops and a student. That the boys spinning tops are of school age is made clear by the writing cases they have on their belts.¹⁵ The precise combination of writing material and spinning tops corresponds with the objects excavated at, for instance, the Grammar schools of Groningen and Gorinchem and with the school time depicted in Veit Konrad Schwarz’s costume book (see ill. 151).

School in February

This characterization of the second phase of life as school time can be further elaborated by combining it with the months of the year. This combination is found in both manuscripts and printed books, always in a calendar, where it has a function comparable to the much more common depictions of the labours of the months: to demonstrate the natural course of the year and the cyclical character of time. For this purpose, life is divided into twelve phases, each lasting six or ten years – schemes also known outside this specific rendering of the theme – so they can be tied to the twelve months of the year and follow a course from January and infancy through to December and death. A 1980 booklet¹⁶ lists the typical examples, showing that January usually has a depiction of children playing, while February has an elaborate school scene. These are related to what is happening in nature at the same time: in the first six years, his infancy, man has no strength and is not yet capable of knowledge, as nature is just ‘waiting’ in the month of January. When six to twelve years old, in his childhood, man grows and acquires some knowledge, as February leans towards spring at the end of the month.

Although most beautifully rendered in manuscripts¹⁷ (see ill. 162), the motif is best known from so-called shepherd’s calendars or *calendriers des bergiers*. Six editions of *Der Scaepherders Kalengier* in Dutch were printed in Antwerp from c.1514 onwards, varying only in minor details. The scope of these books is basic, their calendar almost a farmer’s manual, their contents mainly astronomical and medical. They contain a lot of woodcuts, usually of poor quality, that influenced the German calendars in their turn. The shepherd calendar’s kept being printed in French, English, German, Dutch – where the genre of books still lives on as almanacs – and Danish throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth century. In these editions, the text usually lost the poetic form of earlier French examples. The prologue of the Dutch translator for the c.1514 *Calengier* is clear about the nature of the book: this is ‘the wisdom of the man in the field’ for a healthy life.

‘Een scaepherder wachtende scapen inden velde,
die gheen clerc en was niet een a voer een b en
kende, maer allene doer zijn natuerlijck verstan-
denisse seide: Hoe wel dat dleven ende sterven
des menschen inden handen ende wille gods zijn,

(A shepherd guarding sheep in the field,
who was not a clerk, did not know an A
for a B, but only by his common sense
said: Although man’s life and death are in
the hands and will of God, nevertheless

15 Geisberg 1974, vol. III: 1012;
Lebenstreppe 1983: 15.

16 Dal and Skårup 1980.

17 Now in Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional,
see Dal and Skårup 1980: 41; Lyon,
Bibliothèque Municipale, ms Rés.
B49633, f A4v, see: www.bm-lyon.fr;
Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de
France, ms Smith-Lesouéf 39, f 3v,
see: *Ecole au Moyen Age* 2007: 13.

ill. 162. *School at February*
in calendar, Heures de
Marie Chantault, French,
sixteenth century. Paris,
National Library of France,
ms Smith-Lesouëf 39,
f 3v. Photo taken from:
Alexandre-Bidon
2000: 40.



¹⁸ Quoted in: Dal and Skårup 1980: 28.

¹⁹ Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, ms Smith-Lesouëf 39, see also: Riché and Alexandre-Bidon 1994: 125.

belongs to the lifespan six to twelve.

This second age of man is represented by a school scene (ill. 162). The scene is set indoors, under dark grey arches resting on marble columns; pale pink flags are on the floor and through a tall window the blue sky outside is visible. On the left in the foreground a grey-haired teacher is sitting on a bench, wearing a blue cloak and a black shawl and beret. In front of him is a boy in a pink tunic with a white collar and very green hose, who is pointing with a peg in the book that is held before him. Behind the both of them are four more seated pupils in tunics, two of them wearing hats, one with a book open in his lap. To the right is a second teacher in a grey cloak and black shawl with a black beret on his brown hair. He is busy punishing a barefoot pupil whose blue tunic and white undershirt have been pulled up to expose his bare buttocks, which are suffering the blows of a gold-brown-coloured rod wielded by the master. In the original manuscript, the individual twigs of the birching rod are visible. As often, school is shown as teaching and correcting at the same time.

The full scheme of typical age-bound activities includes, in addition to schooling, children playing with kolf sticks, ball, hobby-horse and nut windmill for January/age 0-6, shooting bows for March/age 12-18, courting at April/age 18-24, a couple riding horseback for May/age 24-30 and a marriage ceremony for June/age 30-36, when according to the prologue man has reached his apogee. It is downhill again after 36: a happy family with children is shown for July/age 36-42, but an act of charity for August/age 42-48, a beggar or prodigal son for September/age 48-54, a family meal – explained in the text: man has a wife and children now and does not need to work anymore – for October/age 54-60, an old person seeing a doctor for November/age 60-66 and finally a dying man already holding the candle for December/age 66-72, the final phase in life.

The French lines underneath the school scene read as follows:

'Les six dapres ressemblent a fevrier	(The six [years] after resemble February
En fin duquel commence le printemps	at the end of which spring begins
Car l'esperit se ouvre prest est a enseigner	When the mind opens ready to be taught
Et doulx devient l'enfant quant a douze ans'	and the child will be sweet at twelve).

This is a very gentle way of pointing out why the image is here and how people of this specific age could be treated according to their abilities. It has come quite a way from the satirical verse in the original poem, which is a sharp dialogue between the pupils and the teacher:

"On nous aprent une lesson	("We are taught a lesson
Qui ne me plaist point en effait"	that I do not like in fact"
"Cy fault il ung mauvais guarsson	"Who fails he is a bad boy
Chastier, ou il se deffait" ²⁰	Punish him, or he will do it again").

The depiction however, with the prominent scene of chastisement, still echoes the older text. The iconographic tradition of the manuscripts would live on much longer than its textual counterpart.

This last verse is literally framing the school scene in another French manuscript, now in Madrid, which is reproduced in the 1980 booklet.²¹ This book has a slightly varied programme for the first three months: a newborn baby inside a house is shown with January, playing children (on hobby-horses) in a town with February, and the school, in or near a corridor, comes with March. The choice

20 In a French Book of Hours, now in Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional, see: Dal and Skårup 1980: 41.

21 Reproduced in: Dal and Skårup 1980 on pages 38-39.

ill. 163. *School at February in calendar, Book of Hours printed by Thielman Kerver, 1523. Paris, National Library of France, Printed books, B 2936, a IIIv. © BNF.*



made is to depict moments rather than time spans: I think these depictions show a child at zero, at six and at twelve years. In this miniature the teacher has risen from his high chair to beat one of the pupils with a rod, while testing another standing before him with an opened book. The 'bad' pupil wearing a hat seems to have been distracted from his lesson: three dice are thrown on the closed book in his lap. He raises his hand to ward off the rod. Both pupils have writing cases hanging from their belts.

The woodcuts or engravings in the printed shepherd's calendars of the sixteenth century invariably show the school scene at February, within a rectangular or oval frame and combined with the zodiac sign of Pisces, either in a sort of cloud or, more



ill. 164. *Capital B 22/15 with the ages of life on the Ducal Palace in Venice, 1340-1355. © Author.*

satisfyingly, in a picture frame like a decoration in the school room. The number of pupils and actions does vary: a 1515 woodcut used by Nicolas Vivian shows just two boys before the teacher,²² while a 1523 engraving used in the books printed by Thielman Kerver,²³ follows the manuscripts (see above) very closely, with the punishment and a group of pupils in the background (ill. 163). An even larger group of pupils can be seen in the woodcut illustrating a 1529 English primer, where the brick walls of the school can be recognized and the teacher's large rod is exaggerated, but no actual punishment is shown.²⁴

Venice: First reading, then counting

The theme of the ages of man, well described by Elizabeth Sears,²⁵ is often presented in combination with other subjects from the intellectual repertoire. On the Ducal Palace of Venice, one of the capitals near the corner of the square and the quay (ill. 164) contains a set of the ages of life within its foliage.²⁶ It is an original white marble sculpture dated to the period 1340-1355²⁷ in which the ages of life are combined with the seven planets, just as in the Palazzo Trinci of Foligno (see § 6.5), but extraordinarily here two of the three phases are represented by schooling. The first ages are on the side facing the Canal Grande, called the Molo, where a swaddled infant and a boy with an alphabet board are shown next to each other. On the side of the loggia are a boy with a counting board and a falconer, on the side facing St. Mark's, a knight in armour and a scholar reading, while on the side of the square, the Piazzetta, an old man with a walking stick and a corpse are preceding the baby on the canal side.

²² Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Livres rares, B 2940, a III, see: Lacombe 1907: 160, no. 278.

²³ I used the specimens in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Livres rares, B 2936 and B 3164, similar, both dated 1522, see: Lacombe 1907: 181, no. 321 and 184, no. 325.

²⁴ Respectively: Book of Hours, printed in Paris by Nicolas Vivian in 1525; Book of Hours of Paris use, printed in Paris by Thielman Kerver in 1523; Prymer of Salisbury use, printed in Paris by François Regnault in 1529, all reproduced in: Dal and Skårup 1980: 32, pictures on p. 34-37.

²⁵ Sears 1986.

²⁶ Numbered B 22/15, on the façade alongside St Mark's square, seventh from the corner.

²⁷ Manno 1999: 100.



ill. 165. Boy with alphabet board, detail of capital in ill. 164. © Author.



ill. 166. Boy with counting board, detail of capital in ill. 164. © Author.

The planets ruling these ages are not depicted on this capital, but the original inscriptions above the personages explain the relationship, giving away the exact length of each phase simultaneously. The first three read as follows:

‘LUNA D[omi]NAT INFANCIE P[er] AN[n]OS III[I]’
 (The moon dominates infancy for 4 years)
 ‘MECUREU D[omi]N[a]T PUERICIE P[er] AN[nos] X’
 (Mercury dominates childhood for 10 years)
 ‘ADOLESENCIE [dominat Ven]US P[er] AN[nos] VII’
 (Adolescence is dominated by Venus for 7 years).

These three are followed by *Iuventus* dominated by the Sun for 19 years, *Senectus* under Mars for 15 years, *Senium* under Jupiter for 12 years, *Decrepitas* under Saturn until death and finally added to the seven ages ‘ULTIMA E[st?] MORS PENA PEC[c?]ATI’ (The last is death as punishment for the sinner).²⁸ This scheme of ages deviates from the usual one as it adds up to forty years even before maturity is reached. The deviation is explained by one author in relation to the specific situation of the citizens of Venice,²⁹ where you were a grown-up in a social sense only at forty, when you could become a soldier or senator, and where you would be eligible for office at fifty-five, exactly after the time-span stated on the capital. Thus, on the building that is the political centre of the city, a specifically Venetian lifecycle is presented.

The second phase, from four to 14 years old, reigned over by Mercury, is typified by a boy who is learning to read (ill. 165). He is holding an alphabet board with the characters from A to K, arranged in rows of four. His right index finger is pointing

²⁸ Inscriptions, now mostly illegible, read and completed by F. Zannotto (Zannotto 1853), cited in: Bashir-Hecht 1977: 167 (footnotes 320–327).

²⁹ Bashir-Hecht 1977: 98.



ill. 167. *Frieze with planets and ages of man in Heremite Church in Padova, fresco, Guariento, 1361. © Author.*

is typified by a somewhat older boy with a counting board, showing the sum '14 ibidem 10 + 4' (ill. 166). This sum is no coincidence: it adds up the two spans of the preceding phases to reach the starting age of this phase. The two boys not only represent reading and counting, but also the art of words and the art of numbers, the Trivium and the Quadrivium, that together made up the medieval curriculum. Trivium and quadrivium were learned in the order they are presented here, and at about the ages indicated.

The capital with the ages of man is part of an intellectual programme for the decoration of the whole façade of the Ducal Palace. Other capitals show, in between biblical stories and scenes of daily life, series of virtues and vices, the months of the year, the planets and the liberal arts. The planets (see § 5.2) are on capital B 18/19,³⁰ personified and accompanied by the signs of the zodiac attributed to them. The seven liberal arts (see Chapter 6) are shown on capital B 17/20³¹ as classical scholars, with wisdom as Solomon added on the eighth side. Grammar is personified by Priscian, holding a peg and a book; the original was inscribed 'GRAMATIC'. Of the others Arithmetic, personified by Pythagoras, is worth noting: he holds a counting board with counters on it; the number on the board was read by F. Zanotto in the nineteenth century as 1344 and may well be a playful inclusion of the date of the sculptures.³²

Padova and Modena: The age of instruction

A life cycle with a school scene for the second phase was included in the wall paintings of the Chiesa degli Eremitani in Padova in 1361. In the Capella Maggiore or main chapel, a frieze of seven ages and planets in monochromes against a background of marble imitation, alternating pink and green marbles (ill. 167), was painted in fresco by Guariento as a supporting zone to the large paintings above. When the story cycle was replaced in the fifteenth century, the frieze with the ages was already covered by the seating, so there the fourteenth-century work was preserved. When the Eremitani church was severely damaged during air raids in 1944, the southern half of the chapel was destroyed, which means that the last three ages of life are now lost and only known from pre-war black-and-white photographs. Luckily, the first phases, including the school scene, are still in place.

³⁰ The original dated 1340-1355 is now in the Museo dell'Opere del Palazzo Ducale inside the Ducal Palace; on the outside is a nineteenth-century copy.

³¹ The original dated 1340-1355 is in the Museo dell'Opere del Palazzo Ducale inside the Ducal Palace; on the outside is a copy.

³² Bashir-Hecht 1977: 109-110.



ill. 168. *Mercury and childhood on the frieze in ill. 167.* © Author.

Of the seven planets only the first four are preserved: Moon, Mercury, Venus, and Sun, as dominators over the ages of infancy, childhood (*pueritia*), adolescence and maturity. The ages are each represented by a male and a female persona on both sides of the seated planet god in the middle. The Moon is flanked by a boy riding a hobby-horse and a girl with a doll in her cloak pulling a cart with another doll in it – very rare and extremely detailed depictions of fourteenth-century toys.³³ Mercury, the age of learning, is holding a book up for the boy standing next to him and pointing in it, while handing a spool to the girl on his other side. Here, the boy is learning to read, while the girl is practising needlework. The boy is dressed in cloak and hat, holding other books in his arm (ill. 168). In the next scene, Venus is flanked by two elegantly dressed adolescents.

The Padova frescoes are closely related to the pen drawings in two early fifteenth-century manuscripts, both presumably illustrated in Padova too, now in Modena and Oxford; the Oxford manuscript³⁴ is of inferior quality and the series of seven planets has been included in an astronomical treatise there. On the contrary, the *Liber Physiognomiae* of c.1440 in the Biblioteca Estense, the library of the powerful Renaissance family D'Este in Modena, is one of the most beautiful astrological manuscripts preserved and accessible through a good facsimile edition.³⁵ The images for the Oxford manuscript were copied by Carlo de'Beldomandi in Padova in 1435³⁶ from a manuscript that must have been the source of the Modena manuscript and possibly the Padovan frescoes as well. The drawings in the Modena manuscript are made in brown ink by a skilful hand and coloured in ink afterwards; they are placed secondarily in spaces left open when the text was written.

In this *Liber Physiognomiae* in Modena, the Eremitani scheme of seven ages and planets is extended to twelve ages, combined with the twelve signs of the zodiac. Because there are only seven planets, five of them occur twice, as they were all linked with two zodiac signs, with exceptions for Sun and Moon that house in one sign of the zodiac each. The fixed combinations of the planets, ages and zodiac signs are:

33 See: Willemsen 2003: 157 and ill. 99.

34 Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms Canon. Misc. 554, studied in July 2004.

The seven page-size drawings of the planets and ages (f 171r-174r) have been added together with drawings of constellations (f 154r-167v) and zodiac signs (f 168r-170v) to long astronomical treatises illustrated only by diagrams. The drawings are somewhat cruder and details like the child's toy cart are not convincing.

35 Modena, Biblioteca Estense, ms lat 697 (α.W.8.20), facsimile: Bini et al 2000; I would like to thank the Biblioteca Estense for allowing me to study the original in detail in November 2003.

36 Bini et al 2000: vol. 2: Commentary, p. 135.

Luna/Moon	Infantia/infancy	Cancer
Mercurius/Mercury	Pueritia/childhood	Gemini & Virgo
Venus	Adolescentia/adolescence	Taurus & Libra
Sol/Sun	Iuventus/youth	Leo
Mars	Senectutis/getting older	Aries & Scorpio
Jupiter	Senex/old age	Pisces & Sagittarius
Saturnus/Saturn	Decrepitas/dying	Capricorn & Aquarius

These specific combinations are common, but rarely are the ages and/or zodiac signs put first, forcing the planets to be repeated. The sequence in the Modena manuscript is even more complex. The planets, where necessary doubled, have been tied meticulously to their signs and ages, divided into two where appropriate, but the sequence of the zodiac signs throughout the medieval year (starting with Aries at Easter time, and ending with Pisces) has been made dominant, which means that the both the ages and the planets are entangled. The contents of the manuscript are therefore best understood when listed out of page order, back into the original order of the ages themselves:

Age	Latin name	page	planet	zodiac sign	subject
1st	infantia	VIII=f 4v	Moon	Cancer	young children playing
2nd	pueritia (I)	X=f 5v	Mercury	Virgo	learning to read, spin
3rd	pueritia (II)	VII=f 4r	Mercury	Gemini	reading, needlework
4th	adolescentia (I)	XI=f 6r	Venus	Libra	courting and music, bare legs
5th	adolescentia (II)	VI=f 3v	Venus	Taurus	marriage with gifts
6th	iuventus	IX=f 5r	Sun	Leo	rich man, woman with scissors
7th	senectutis (I)	V=f 3r	Mars	Aries	knight fighting, woman with knife
8th	senectutis (II)	XII=f 6v	Mars	Scorpio	knight standing, woman spinning
9th	senex (I)	XV=f 8v	Jupiter	Pisces	man with purse, nun praying
10th	senex (II)	XIII=f 7r	Jupiter	Sagittarius	man reading, woman with rosary
11th	decrepitas (I)	XV=f 8r	Saturn	Aquarius	man on crutches, old woman with purse
12th	decrepitas (II)	XVIII=f 7v	Saturn	Capricorn	sick in bed, seated, foot-warmers

Fig. IV *Concept of the decoration of the ages of man in the Liber Physiognomiae in Modena.*

Only when viewed in this sequence, can the precise appearance of the persons and subjects with the planets be understood. Clearly, they were thought of in this sequence, starting with the youngest, the age of play, followed by school, courting, richness, hardness, repentance and finally the sorrows of old age. They may be seen as a full lifecycle of a man and a woman of the elite. Iconographically, the ages that had to be split up were divided into two successive scenes, showing a first and second phase within the age. In all depictions the costumes, hair styles and postures change with life progressing, and the planet gods also age in time. These details betray a different design, in which the ages must have been dominating the sequence.

To my opinion it is unlikely that the original manuscript had twelve episodes; the Modena manuscript gives away a scheme of seven ages that was adapted, only slightly varying from one ‘half’ age to the other, and both the Oxford manuscript and the frescoes in Padova copied a series of seven ages of man, that does not seem to be incomplete. Therefore, the doubling of the planets and the splitting of

X

Mercurius
VIRGO



Natus sibi uirgine a medio augusti usque ad medium septembris mulieribus semper imperabit dominatior erit. Ingeniosus. solutus. in arte quod uoluerit ipsam faciet. Mercurius erit animosus. Quicquid uidebit concupiscet. Cito insatur. Inimicos suos sepe debet. Primum uirginem non obtinebit. Anno. xxxi. fortunam habebit. In flumine turbabitur. Quid habebit non cellabit. De ferro cicatrices habebit. Uivet annis. lxx. mensibus quatuor. Conuenienter uiuet in orbe nec diues nec pauper.

Eodem tempore puella nata erit uerecundosa. Ingeniosa laboriosa. sed negligens Anno. xii. nubere debet. Primum sponsum non obtinebit. Primum filius non erit utilis. Aliam mulierem beneficia habebit. In flumine turbabitur. De alto ruet. Anno. xxxii. si homines pecunia ei dabunt Anno. x. precordiarum artium dolorem patietur. Et si euaserit uiuet annis. lvi. Dies mercurii solis sunt istis meliores. Dies martis est istis malus in omnibus.



Mercurius
GEMINI

VII



ill. 169 Mercury and pupils at Virgo in the Liber physiognomiae, Padova, c.1440. Modena, Estense Library, ms α.W.8.20, f 5v. © Foto Roncaglia, Modena.

ill. 170. Mercury and pupils at Gemini in the Liber physiognomiae, Padova, c.1440. Modena, Estense Library, ms α.W.8.20, f 4r. © Foto Roncaglia, Modena.

Natus sub gemini a medio madij usq; ad medij lunij. Cicatrices habebit inguinem. Formosus erit. Ad seniores pecuniam tranabit cum ratione. Ad iuvenem ducet. Loca ignota calcabit. Sapiens subtilis in libenter peregrinabitur. Et erit iactator cum magnis uerbis et non per manebit in loco ubi natus fuerit. Sed transmutabitur. Negligens erit in suis actibus. Satis habebit diuitias. Usq; ad annos .xxxv. p. culis crescente gaudebit. Vxor ei non dabitur nisi raro. Sed alienis nec mulieribus. In capite uel in sinistro brachio morsus canis experietur. In aqua turbabitur. Azare transibit. Diues erit. Libenter expendet. Alationibus est sibi custodiendus. Vixit annis Centum mensibus mensibus decem secundum naturam.

Eodem tempore puella nata ad honorem magni pueniet. De alienis bonis sua procurabit. Falsisq; criminibus arguetur. Anno .xiiij. nubere debet. Nisi uelit ex toto continere. Omnia pericula euadet. Diuitijs satis habundabit marito congratulabitur. Pupam namq; ipse gaudebit. Libenter peregrinabitur. In uerbis multum habundabit. Vixit annis .lx. Dies mercurii est istis melior. Dies solis et martis malus in factis suis.



the ages could have been the invention of the artist who decorated the Modena manuscript and must have adapted the seven copied drawings to a scheme of twelve months already provided by the book's concept and text. Probably he designed the variations before making the drawings, as they so precisely build up. The solution is definitely satisfying from an artistic point of view, but it remains doubtful if the book functioned to its full potential with so complex a decorative programme.

The manuscript contains more than these twelve zodiac-planet-ages. The text and illustrations, on paper, are enclosed by a sheet of parchment, which in its turn is enclosed by paper pages. The book opens with an *astrolabium planum*, a solar circle with a separate, moveable moon hand and sun hand cut out of paper and ends with a similar *astrolabium zodiacum*, a zodiac circle. The zodiac series is followed by a book of dream explanations. There is an interesting paradox between the lively and iconographically original drawings, valued highly later on, and the quite cheap finish of the book. It is on paper and the only parchment used is purely functional, to withstand the pressure of the composite circles at the front and back. The illustrations are in ink and although they can be pinpointed to the Veneto region, their maker cannot be identified; they might be the work of a writer, who could draw as well and had the models at hand. As paper would have been modest for the court, but astrology as a theme is very suited for it, this 'handy encyclopaedia of astrological medicine', in Latin, but without any Christian references, may well have been the study book or handbook of someone attached to the University of Padova and/or the court of Modena. The choices made for practical texts in simple Latin, illustrations of a modest kind, and a cheap and functional production all point in that direction.³⁷

The planet Mercury, dominating the age of education, like most planets, houses in two zodiac signs. Because of that, two depictions of schooling can be found in this *Liber Physiognomiae*, on folios 4r and 5v; when focussing on the ages, the latter one comes first. On f 5v (ill. 169), we find Mercury seated behind a lectern, dressed in purple doctor's robes and chaperon, with one book open before him and eight more spread over his lectern. To his right a young boy is standing with a double writing tablet, wearing a tunic tied with a girdle and pointed shoes. To Mercury's left is a young girl who pulls a tread from a spindle whorl; she is dressed in a long cloak and her semi-long hair is tied together with a ribbon. Mercury is handing the writing tablet to the boy, while giving a spool to the girl. The angel holding a cloth in a roundel in the top zone must be the zodiac sign of Virgo.

On folio 4r (ill. 170), Mercury is sitting behind a lectern with a *sphaera* (a planetary sphere) and four books, wearing doctor's robes. He is indicated as an old man by his white hair and beard. To his right is a boy standing with an open book from which he is reading (or singing) aloud. On the other side is a seated girl with something in her lap, presumably a piece of needlework, although it could be a scroll – even with a magnifying glass and the original manuscript, this cannot be determined. Not only Mercury but also his companions are older in this depiction. This can be seen in their clothes and hairdos: the long cloak and lavishly decorated sleeves of the boy and the girl's long dress and loose hair. The twins in the top zone of the page stand for the zodiac sign of Gemini.

In the texts on folios 4r and 17v belonging to both Mercuries are references to learning, study, knowledge of numbers and writing jobs as typical for *mercuriales*, children of Mercury:

37 Bini et al 2000: vol. 2: Commentary, p. 7-8 and 122-123.

‘Sapiens subtilis in libenter pelgrinabitur et
erit iactator cum magnis verbis’.

‘Mercurius lectoriam libenter est autem
mercuriales sapiens’.

‘Mercurius homines facit scriptores atque in
legendo studiosos numeri scientiam/ habentes
inveniuntur autem Mercuriales sepiissime
scripture domini ut cancellari’.³⁸

(He is wise and clever and will like to
travel and will show off with big words).

(Mercury who loves to read also makes
Mercury’s children wise).

(Mercury makes his men excel in writing
and reading and study the art of numbers/
therefore Mercury’s children are often
found as clerks to lords or chancellors).

In the ‘first’ scene of education, on folio 5v, the children are learning to read and spin, while in the ‘second’ scene, on folio 4r, they are busy speaking and doing hand work, thus reaping the fruits of their learning efforts earlier – the second scene represents a further stage in their education. Although the attributes of the boy and girl in the second scene are not clear, together with Mercury holding a sphere this scene may have represented the Quadrivium as well. In the first scene, the emphasis is on the learning of the basics and Mercury is depicted with a large number of books, which allows the interpretation that this represents the Trivium as well. In that case, both depictions together cover the school curriculum, with the youngest learning and the older practising their arts. In a scheme this complex, such a thing is not far-fetched – compare the Venice capital described above. Like many of the encyclopaedic programmes of medieval Italy, this series of depictions illustrates more than one theme. Although tied to the course of the year through the zodiac, and with dominance for the ages of man iconographically, the children educated are shown as children of Mercury too.

5.2 The learned children of Mercury

A book full of wisdom

On folio 16r of the famous ‘Hausbuch’ of c.1475-1480, a schoolmaster with three pupils can be detected in the middle to the left (ill. 171). The master, behind a lectern with books and inkwells is busy hitting one of the pupils on its bare buttocks with a birching rod. To the left is a pupil writing on a tablet, while to the right a third pupil sits reading, his schoolbag at his feet. The schoolmaster with his audience is surrounded by other professionals: an astronomer, an organ builder, a panel painter, alchemists and a sculptor; there is also a couple enjoying an abundant meal offering a glass of wine to the sculptor. They are watched over by an old man on horseback, flanked by the zodiac signs of Gemini and Virgo: the planet god Mercury. The flanking verses contain allusions to the warm nature of the planet, to Gemini and Virgo as its houses, its quick orbit of 354 days, and to ‘Mercurius kint’ (Mercury’s child) that is ‘wol gelert und gut schreiber, goltsmid, maler und bildsneider, orgeln machen und orglocken fein’ (a fine scholar and good writer, goldsmith, painter and sculptor, making nice organs and clocks).³⁹

The image is one of a series, showing all seven planets. They can be identified by their names on banderoles and by the accompanying texts, but the iconographic rendering is at least unfamiliar: the pages are filled with people alone or in small groups, forming a sort of enumeration of occupations and crafts: for instance a couple of scholars can be seen as part of the image of Jupiter on f 12r (ill. 172). The planet itself can be found above these people, depicted in the classical way personified as a god with fixed attributes. In the Renaissance, the planets and their

38 Bini et al 2000: vol. 2: Commentary, p. 47-51 and 74-77.

39 Bossert and Storck 1912: X; see also: Filedt Kok 1985: 218-224.

ill. 171. *Children of Mercury in Hausbuch, c.1475-1480. Wolfegg Castle, collection of Christophe Graf zu Waldburg Wolfegg. Photo taken from postcard.*



influence on mankind were shaped into this specific image of a planet god and his or her 'children': the people who according to their date of birth are born into one of the zodiac signs connected with this planet, and thus under its influence. The theme can be traced from both fresco painting in Italy and manuscript illumination in the North to printing on both sides of the Alps.

The 'Hausbuch', that in reality is a warfare manual with some useful additions, fits well into a tradition of gatherings of a kind of knowledge, nowadays described



ill. 172. *Children of Jupiter in Hausbuch, c.1475-1480. Wolfegg Castle, collection of Christophe Graf zu Waldburg Wolfegg. Photo taken from postcard.*

as ‘astrology’ and ‘astronomy’, that was imported from Antiquity. As early as Greek and Roman times, there was an elaborate interest in the cyclical character of time and the influence of the gods and the heavens on the course of life and the character of man. The iconography of the ancient gods was ‘invented’ in Antiquity too, and the main elements of the iconography of the gods are known from Greek and Roman art. Images of these ‘pagan’ gods, keeping the attributes they had in Greek and Roman iconography, became popular again in Renaissance Italy, and

afterwards also in Germany and the Netherlands. In Antiquity, these planet gods, like the zodiac signs, seasons, muses, liberal arts, etc. had all been separate images. What was new in the Renaissance is that these images were combined into an intellectual programme.

In the 'Hausbuch', the planets are presented in the following order: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury and the Moon. This is their common sequence, based on the Ptolemaic model of the placement of the planets and the earth, that was used almost unchanged in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. In this ancient model, the earth is seen as the lowest sphere, above which are first water, then air and then fire. Above the spheres are the orbits of the planets, starting with the Moon, that is closest to earth, and ending with Saturn as the one furthest away. Above the seven planets one imagined the firmament with fixed stars and zodiac signs, and above all that were the heavens. Series of planets always keep this logical order; they can start with the Moon or with Saturn, as in the 'Hausbuch', but all celestial bodies have fixed places within the sequence.

A painted encyclopaedia

The antique tradition of planet gods emerged mixed with Arabic inheritance and transformed from the medieval period. In that way, it became highly fashionable again in the Renaissance, predominantly in Italy. Then and there, knowledge quickly became something not only to be studied seriously, but also something that could be shown off, as status. This is very clear in the decoration of the Sala della Ragione in Padova, rightly considered to be the first encyclopaedic intellectual programme of decoration and the basis of all series of planets with their children in monumental art.⁴⁰ The Sala della Ragione, a large rectangular room in the middle of the medieval heart of Padova, was built as a meeting room for the city council of this Veneto city. It was constructed in the years 1306-1309 by Fra' Giovanni degli Eremitani (active 1295-1318) and decorated shortly afterwards; in the fourteenth century the frescoes were attributed to Giotto (1267-1337) who might have painted them in the years 1312-1313 when he worked in Padova. After a devastating fire in 1420, the cycle was restored heavily and for a large part repainted by the Padovan artist Giovanni Miretto with the help of Stefano da Ferrara.⁴¹ The scheme however is the original. The decoration on the four walls covers a total of 218 meters of frescoes of around 10 meters in height.

The programme consists of twelve parts, illustrating a month each, starting with March on the eastern wall. Each part is divided into three zones of nine scenes. Every month starts with an apostle, followed by an allegory of the month, the zodiac sign, the planet, the labour of the month, occupations, various constellations and finally the 'astrological types' or children of this month. Because the twelve months are the starting point here, each planet is shown when one of the zodiac signs in which it houses comes up. According to Ptolemaic tradition, each planet had one house for the day and one for the night; the Sun had only a day house and the Moon only a night house. In that way, the twelve zodiac signs housed the seven planets. In this case, that means that Sun and Moon are shown once, with July (Leo) and June (Cancer), while the five planets are shown twice each, in the case of Mercury with May (because of Mercury housing in Gemini) and August (same for Virgo).

The complex iconographic scheme is shown best by an example. I chose one of the months reigned over by Mercury: August, as this shows a grammar teacher and other 'learned' professions. This month starts on the right half of the west

⁴⁰ Tenenti et al 1992.

⁴¹ The dates of both are unknown; none of the larger Dictionaries of Artists mentions more than that they were working on the Sala in the years after 1420. Giovanni Miretto is sometimes identified with Niccolò Mireto or Miretti (1375-after 1450); Stefano da Ferrara is sometimes falsely identified with Stefano Falzagalloni, also called Stefano di Ferrara (before 1430-1500) but is active too early to be the same person.



wall and continues in the far left side of the north wall. The starting point is St. Thomas, immediately to the right of the evangelist St. Mark, the large image central in the west wall. Thomas is covering two fields, with a hill with three trees above him. Next, the nine zones from left to right and within each zone the three scenes top to bottom show: a dog (constellation of Canicola), a man reading, a man writing; another dog (constellation of Sirio), two men measuring cloth, a man designing; a man leading two oxen (constellation of Boves Aratorii), a man and child harvesting grapes (labour of August), a man picking fruit from a tree; winged male figure, geometrician, winged female figure with pair of compasses; juggler (?), Virgo (zodiac sign August), banker; (fig. 173) girl with cymbal, painter, teacher of grammar (ill. 174); winged male figure, money weigher, man inside a wall (hermit preaching?); woman spinning, Mercury as a scholar with an armillary sphere (the planet housing in Virgo), man studying. The woman sowing in the next top field, above the apostle for September, may be part of the scheme for August, but the hill with trees in the beginning is not.

This means the month is represented by the zodiac sign, the planet, the labour of that month, some constellations and a number of occupations suited for children of August, born in Virgo and thus under Mercury. The occupations are artistic, intellectual and mercantile: painting and making music, studying and teaching, trading and counting money. In other words, the nature of Mercury, when combined with Virgo, produces and protects people who are best in study, trade, and the arts.

In Padua, all scenes are separate images: the programme can be comprehended only when the walls are looked upon as an entity. The influence of this work of

ill. 173. *Padova, Sala della Ragione, overview, frescoes, after 1420. Photo taken from: Tenenti et al 1992: vol 3, 'Parete Nord'.*

ill. 174. *Grammar teacher in Sala della Ragione in Padova. Photo taken from: Tenenti et al 1992: vol 2, Tav. 161.*



art has been great, and combinations of elements from the painted encyclopaedia in the Sala della Ragione can be found elsewhere, especially in the decorative programmes of public buildings in Renaissance Italy like the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena or the Fontana Maggiore in Perugia. Personifications of the planets combined with other cyclical elements of time like zodiacal signs and occupations can be found, for instance, in the famous frescoes in the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara⁴² and in the Sala delle Pianete e degli Arti Liberali in the Palazzo Trinci in Foligno.⁴³ Here, we will follow only the trail of the combination of the planets with their children, as they include the teacher with Mercury.

Planets and their children

The first occasion in monumental art when the planets are shown with their ‘children’ within the same image – as far as I know – are the frescoes by Pinturicchio (1454–1513) in the Borgia Apartments in the Vatican Palace, painted in 1492–1494 for Pope Alexander VI.⁴⁴ In the Sala delle Sibille the seven planets are shown each with a group of people beneath them. These groups are characterized as the typical human beings connected with this planet. Because of their compactness, this series is a good one to demonstrate the general idea of which planet has what kind of children.

The Sala delle Sibille in Rome is almost square, and has a programme of, as the name of the room indicates, sibyls in the lunettes. In between the lunettes, each wall has two octagonal depictions of planets; in this case, a personification of Astrology is added to reach the required number of eight. The series starts on the entrance wall with Luna (the Moon) and Mercury (ill. 175), followed by Venus and Sol (the Sun), Mars and Jupiter above the exit, and Saturn and Astrology. The planets are in their logical order in accordance with their distance from the earth. Astrology is personified here by a group of astrologers, holding an armillary sphere. The Moon, because of its influence on the tides, is shown above some sailors and fishermen. Mercury has a group of artists and scholars, Venus some lovers, and the Sun as

⁴² Varese 1989.

⁴³ Benazzi and Mancini 2001.

⁴⁴ Poeschel 1995.



ill. 175. *Children of Mercury in the Sala delle Sibille, Pinturicchio, 1492-1494. Vatican City, Vatican Palace, Borgia apartment. © Author.*

Apollo reigns over dignitaries. Beneath Mars is a group of soldiers, Jupiter has some noblemen hunting and Saturn shows both disabled and charitable persons. The scheme is almost the same as in some manuscripts of Christine de Pisan's *L'epistre Othéa*⁴⁵ but executed on a much larger scale.

The scheme deduced from the Pinturicchio frescoes in the Vatican is the basic one encountered in all depictions of the planet children, but it can be much more detailed, divided more precisely into various jobs, trades and arts. The most elaborate scheme is encountered in a sequence of seven prints made in Florence in the 1460s and attributed to the Florentine engraver Baccio Baldini (c.1436-1487).⁴⁶ These images show the planet in the middle, at the top, as a classical deity, riding a chariot in the air, holding the attributes that have been his or hers since Antiquity. Mercury, for instance (ill. 176) is wearing a tunic, winged boots and a winged helmet, and carries the *caduculus*, the sceptre with two snakes curled around it. His chariot is drawn by two cocks, and on the wheels are the symbols of the zodiacal signs in which Mercury houses: Virgo and Gemini (here, we see Sagittarius in the second wheel, but that is a mistake; even in the text beneath the signs are identified correctly). A banderole shows his name, in Italian, while two banderoles have been added to include the names of the zodiacal signs.

Below the planet god, his 'children' are shown, the human beings born under the influence of Mercury and thus of a certain nature, making them suited for certain occupations. Within an elaborate, distinctly Renaissance-style architecture, we see fresco painters (top left), astronomers (middle), an organist (top right), a

⁴⁵ Hindman 1986, see esp. Plates 12-23, taken from the manuscript in Paris, Bibliothèque National, ms fr 606.

⁴⁶ I studied and used here the full series, including doubles, in the collection of Prints & Drawings of the British Museum, inv.nos. 1845-8-25-467 until 476. There are also some copies in this collection, with a title page for a full series with inv.no. V.1-74.

ill. 176. Baccio Baldini, Children of Mercury, c.1470. London, British Museum, Prints & Drawings, inv.no. 1845-8-25-475. © British Museum.



clockmaker (middle right) and reading scholars (bottom right), a rich dining table (bottom middle), a sculptor (bottom left) and finally a goldsmith and an engraver (middle left). The engraver is clearly cutting a human figure into a metal plate. Here, Baccio Baldini almost depicted himself at work.

For a set of contemporary copies with German captions of the Baldini prints, a separate front or title page was created, which shows a woodcut calendar for the years of 1465 until 1517. This indicates that the planet prints were meant as a set, to be used with the calendar, or even to be put up next to it, as a changing calendar plate. The frontispiece also gives a good *terminus ante quem* for the copies, and thus

for the Italian originals: they must have been made before 1465, which makes them a very early example within the history of print indeed.

In Germany, the Baldini prints inspired a series dated 1531 and attributed in turns to Georg Pencz (c.1500-1550) and Hans Sebald Beham (1500-1550).⁴⁷ They use the general scheme of the Baldini prints and many of the elements, but the scenes are more compact and less detailed, the style of execution is very different and the inscription is in German and puts more emphasis on the occupations: all arts are mentioned here as suited for those Mercury-born, and it is added that the hour of Mercury is good for teaching children:

‘Mercurius / ist ein Planet der kunst und
maysetschafft / heiß und trucken / verkehrlicher
Natur / gut bey den guten / und böß bey den
bößen / ein bezeychnerder schreyber / rechner
/ kaufflew / Rentmayster / Verß und lieder
dichter / der Astronomi / Loyci un[d] aller
suptiller künstner un[d] Poete[n]. Seine künst
/ sind Astronomia / Arithmetica / Loyca /
Poetria / un[d] all ander künste und practicz
zu Judicieren und weyssagen auch kauffen
verkauffen / wechseln und gewerb treiben /
Retorica / und der gleiche künste. Seine
kranckheyten sind die gaystlichen kranckhey
der Selle / Als grausame gedancken und umhu
die gegen Gott un[d] an der Seel schwechen,
töbig oder unsinnig machen. Sein Tag ist der
Mitwoch und des Sambstags nacht / Sein farb
an kleydern sind gemengt graw und unferwig.
An Rossen all Schymel pferdt. Seine hewser
an dem hymel sind die Zwilling und die
Junckfraw / Sein erhöhung auch die Junckfraw
/ sein tal die Visch.

In der stund Mercurii ist gut brieff schreyben /
potten senden / kauffen / wandern / artzneyen /
reytten / baum pflantzen / mit Künigen reden /
kinder lernen / brunnen graben / pero anheben.
In der stund Mercurii ist böß eemachen / erb
kauffen / knecht dinge / zu hauß ziehen.’

(Mercury is a planet of art and mastership,
hot and dry, of flexible nature, good with
good and bad with the bad. A born writer,
counter, merchant, rentmaster, writer of
poems and songs, astronomer, logician
and all subtle artists and poets. His arts are
astronomy, arithmetic, logic, poetry and
all other arts and practices of saying
justice and telling fortune, buying and
selling as well, changing money and
conducting business, rhetoric and similar
arts. His illnesses are the mental illness of
the soul, like dark thoughts and humour
that work against God and the soul and
cause madness and rage. His day is
Wednesday and Saturday night. His taste
in clothes is mixed gray and uncolourful.
In horses all white horses. His houses in
the heavens are Gemini and Virgo. His
height Virgo too, his low Pisces.

In the hour of Mercury it is suited to write
letters, send post, buy, walk, doctoring,
riding, plant trees, talk to kings, teach
children, dig wells, raise fences.

In the hour of Mercury it is not wise to
marry, hire servants, go home).

The ‘block books’

The planet children have an even more elaborate history in manuscript illumination than they have in painting and print, and the first books showing the full scheme are the immediate ‘neighbours’ of the *Hausbuch* from the fifteenth century. These manuscripts are either German or Dutch, and have been published extensively by Hauber.⁴⁸ The most extensive is a ‘block book’ from around 1475, now in the University Library of Tübingen.⁴⁹ It is a manuscript on paper, 28 x 21 cm, containing 325 pages and hundreds of drawings. The planets are at the back of the book, on f 266v to 273r, from Saturn to Moon; a text on the left and a picture on the right-hand page have been devoted to each planet. The depiction of Mercury (ill. 177)

47 British Museum, Prints & Drawings, inv.nos. 1895-1-22-294 until 300. There are also copies of these in the same collection. See also: Niemeyer s.a.

48 Hauber 1916.

49 Inv.no. M.d.2.

OPPOSITE PAGE:

ill. 177. *Children of Mercury in c.1475 manuscript. Tübingen, University Library, ms Md 2, f 271r.*
© UB Tübingen.

shows the scheme in its full extent: Mercury is in the middle at the top, in a tondo, shown as a physician with an astrolabe and a urine bottle, a book open in his lap; he is sitting on a snake. At both sides of the tondo are a young woman (Virgo) and naked twins (Gemini) for his houses. The tondo is held up by a naked man, suggesting that the tondo is in fact a globe. To the right of the globe is Hercules killing a lion. In between these two mythological figures is a crowned female figure on a throne. Top left are a bearded scholar and a knight with the head of Medusa; at his feet is a geometrical triangle.

In the middle zone and in the foreground – although there are no clear distinctions between the figures on top and the real ‘children’ underneath – are the craftsmen born under Mercury. The middle group from left to right shows a sculptor, a clockmaker, a dentist, a female grammar teacher with a pupil, and a leather worker. In front are two people enjoying a meal, a writing doctor (possibly an alchemist), a panel painter painting a Madonna, with, in front of them, an organ and a smith making a bell. The text devoted to Mercury is typical, like those found in all manuscripts in this group, including the *Hausbuch* (see above).

In its textual form, the theme would have a longer life than its iconographic counterpart. A Dutch version in a printed book of 1581, *Dat kleyne Planeten Boeck ofte Waerseger konst / mit den vii planeten ende xii zeychenen* (ill. 178)⁵⁰ still reads much the same and stresses that children would do good going to school in the time reigned over by Mercury:

‘Mercurius kint [...] is ooc walspreekende [...]
sijn sinne staen hem na grote konsten / ende
werdt gheschickt tot predicken / oft tot
astronomie /x. Ende in summa tot den al der
natuerlicksten conste het sy int lesen schrijven
dichten oft malen oft wat het derghelicke

(Mercury's child [...] is eloquent too [...],
his senses go to great arts and he is fit
for preaching or astronomy. And to
sum up for all worldly arts, either
writing, making verses or painting or
whatever art it is, he can learn them all

ill. 178. *Venus and Mercury in Dat kleyne Planeten Boeck of 1581. Leiden, University Library, Dousa 1202 H 24.*
© UB Leiden.



⁵⁰ Leiden, University Library, 1202 H 24.



consten zijn / die sijn hem al mogelick te
begrijpen/ [...] ende wat hy hoert oft siet dat
behalt hy [...] Inde tijdt Mercurius / is goet
kinder toe scholen gaen [...].⁵¹

[...] and what he hears or sees he
remembers [...] In the time of Mercury
it is good for children to go to school).

From the sixteenth century onwards, the texts became more and more detached from the images. Especially in sixteenth-century Dutch printing, the image of the planet god became more important than the enumeration of the occupations suited for its children.⁵¹ Moreover, the depictions became detached from the texts, with captions reduced substantially and limited to outlining the capacities of the planet rather than the character of those under its influence. The iconographic component of the theme of the planet children would vanish largely from the art stage after the sixteenth century. As text, the theme of the children of the planets found its way into all kinds of popular literature and functional materials like almanacs, up to the present day.

Worldly knowledge

To modern scholars it is clear that the theme of the children of the planets is traceable from Antiquity throughout the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. But these images were not prominent in medieval art and patrons of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries must have considered them classical themes, brought to life again in their Renaissance. Astrology became very popular in this time, especially in the decoration of secular buildings and texts. The children of the planets was one of the most elaborate astrological subjects, demonstrating the influence of one's horoscope on one's character and way of life. Intellectual programmes like these sets of planets, but also liberal arts (see Chapter 6), muses, temperaments, virtues etc. seem to have been considered as new material, derived directly from Classical Antiquity. The popularity of the children of the planets can be explained, at least partly, as part of a whole spectrum of knowledge that became accessible for the first time, in books and prints, to the people of what they considered a modern era.

The texts and images of Mercury and his children, as well as those of the other planets, have a long tradition. The same elements and combinations are encountered over and over, in different centuries and regions, as a canon. They are rooted firmly in an age-long development sketched brilliantly by Seznec in his *The Survival of the Pagan Gods* (first printed 1940). The planet gods themselves, already depicted and described many times especially in Roman Antiquity, kept more or less the same appearance during the Middle Ages. Because of that, they were still recognizable in the Renaissance when they were encountered once more in the ancient texts and monuments. The elements that became attributes of the personification of the planet, of the planet god and thus of his children, were derived from the characteristics of the celestial body it personified.

Mercury, for its high orbital velocity, was personified as a messenger, who could quickly go from one place to the other; in Antiquity, he was the messenger of the gods. It is for this quickness that Mercury is associated with the metal quicksilver and is traditionally shown with wings, either sprouting from his back or, more often, on his shoes and helmet. The messenger function and velocity also made him a 'patron' for merchants and thieves and anybody involved with money. This capacity backfired on him, and Mercury himself can be shown as a merchant. Because of his involvement with letters and written things, he subsequently

⁵¹ For instance in the series of cosmological prints by Maarten de Vos, Maarten van Heemskerck and Hendrick Goltzius, see: Veldman 1980, 1983 and 1986.



became a patron for men of letters, especially for those writing or teaching. This reflected on him even more prominently, as Mercury is quite often shown as a scholar himself surrounded by books, spheres and other paraphernalia of study (see ill. 173). The capacity of Mercury and his children for dealing with words and numbers is why many of the depictions show writers, students, mathematicians, and especially teachers.

There is a beautiful school group in the foreground of a drawing by Pieter Brueghel the Elder of 1560, which shows Temperance as one in a series of the seven virtues (ill. 179). The personified virtue in the middle is labelled *TEMPORANTIA* on the rim of her cloak and holds glasses, measuring instruments and a clock on her head. Around her are groups of people involved in artistic and intellectual activities: actors in a theatre, a choir with an organist, astronomers measuring earth and heavens, geometers measuring a column, archers shooting the parrot, scholars disputing. In the foreground corner there is a painter and a group of calculators, as a counterpart to the school. The schoolmaster, seated to the left in a thick cloak and warm beret, is holding a paddle, while the rod is put under his belt, from which also a double writing case hangs. The child standing before him points at the characters on an alphabet board, saying them aloud, and the teacher is speaking as well. Nine more pupils are grouped around them, one on a stool, two with bags over their shoulders, six with books (two read together) and one reading an unscrolled charter with a seal. The drawing was explicitly meant to be printed; the inscriptions and even the characters on the alphabet board are already in mirror image.⁵²

ill. 179. *Pieter Brueghel sr., Temperance, 1560. Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, inv.no. MB 331. © BVB.*

⁵² Unlike in Brueghel's drawing of the ass at school, see ill. 99, where all the alphabets are the right way.

The depiction is detailed and quite elaborate, and there is not a hint of parody. But the school has no explicit relation with the surrounding scenes – all are almost separate depictions within a larger frame, and their relation to Temperance is unclear as well. Even the Latin caption added comes across a little bit ‘artificial’:

‘Vivendum ut nec voluptati dediti prodigi et (In our strife for pleasure we must see to it
luxuriosi appareamus nec avara tenacitati not to seem wasteful and worldly, but also
sordidi aut obscuri existamus’.⁵³ not to live in filth and darkness because of greed.).

It is a fair general description of temperance, and of course there are some scenes that can be understood as worldly or luxurious (the actors) and some as greedy (the accountants), but those aspects could have been illustrated better. The puzzling treatment that Brueghel gave the theme of this virtue – and indeed, of the other virtues as well – may well go back to an original set of models not for a series of seven virtues, but for a series of seven planets, that Brueghel has adapted. Indeed, one wonders whether Brueghel might actually have seen one of the blockbooks himself, or if Lucas Cranach did, who also designed a school with Mercury.⁵⁴ The groups depicted in the Bruegel drawing correspond exactly and remarkably with the usual occupations of the children of Mercury, which includes all the artists, craftsmen and scholars present, including the school teacher.

⁵³ Orenstein 2001: 190–192.

⁵⁴ Calendar of Boniface of Czorbegk, c.1512, see: Geisberg 1974: 614.

GRAMMAR AS A TEACHER

6.1 Grammar and the other Arts

In the 1590s, the Antwerp graphic artist Maarten de Vos produced a series of pen drawings showing allegorical representations of arts and virtues. These abstract notions are personified by ladies in classical dress with objects as their attributes, and inscribed with their current, Latin names underneath. Among them, there is a full set of personifications of the seven liberal arts: *Grammatica*, *Dialectica*, *Rhetorica*, *Arithmetica*, *Geometria*, *Musica*, and *Astronomia* (ills. 180 to 186). Of the first three, the Trivium containing the arts of letters, Grammar is depicted teaching a boy to read, Dialectics is making hand gestures, and Rhetoric is holding a *caduculus* (Mercury's staff). Of the last four, the Quadrivium containing the arts of numbers, Arithmetic is counting on a board, Geometry is measuring with a compass on a globe, Music is playing the lute, and Astronomy is looking at the stars holding a nocturnal globe. The liberal arts are part of a total of 60 designs for temporary decorations honouring the entree of archduke Ernst of Austria in Antwerp in June 1594. The drawings were not meant as print designs and therefore are not in mirror image.¹

There are more, smaller details in the drawings. Astronomy is not only showing the stars, but also crowned with them, and there are other instruments and sheet music in the depiction of music. Geometry has a measuring rod, a try-square and a frog with her, while Arithmetic rests her foot on an *abacus*, a counting board with casting counters on it. Rhetoric holds a carrot, and Dialectics has a parrot on her head and a frog at her feet, both animals known for their voice, but unaware of the meaning of what they say. Finally, the boy being taught by Lady Grammar, with her arm around his shoulders and pointing in the book he is reading, has been placed on a pile of books to stand higher up.

The seven liberal arts were the foundation of education in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, as they had been in Antiquity. They were thought of in this fixed order: first the Trivium, which was seen as the basis, and then the Quadrivium, which was seen as advanced. The foundation of it all was grammar: learning to read (and write). Dialectics, also called *Logica* (logic), would teach the meaning of the words, while rhetoric taught the art of speech. Arithmetic was the basis of the Quadrivium: learning to count (and make sums). Geometry was basically applied arithmetic, and music and astronomy (also called *Astrologia*, astrology) were viewed strongly as determined by numbers, which could be traced and understood.

¹ Reinsch 1967: 172-176 and 181-185.

ill. 180. Maarten de Vos, Grammar, before 1594. Antwerp, Museum of Arts, Prints & Drawings, inv.no. 45.A.VI.5. © IRPA-KIK Brussels, no. B16580.

ill. 181. Maarten de Vos, Dialectic, before 1594. Antwerp, Museum of Arts, Prints & Drawings, inv.no. 42.A.VI.3. © IRPA-KIK Brussels, no. B16581.

ill. 182. Maarten de Vos, Rhetoric, before 1594. Antwerp, Museum of Arts, Prints & Drawings, inv.no. 18.A.VI.7. © IRPA-KIK Brussels, no. B16579.



The concept of the seven liberal arts was not only theoretical, let alone only an artistic scheme. The school curriculum of the secondary schools in the whole of Western Europe was constructed around this concept, with classes in grammar prevailing – that is why they are called Grammar schools in English – but with room for the other arts as well. It must be said that the Trivium prevailed and that only very good schools made work of the whole Quadrivium; their top classes sometimes rivalled the first stage of university, which was the Faculty of the Arts, as the seven liberal arts were seen as the foundation of university education as well. The concept of the liberal arts was not seen as being hostile to religion in general, even if pre-Christian texts were used and ‘magic’ numbers recovered; the idea prevailed that everything existing had been created by God, and deciphering and understanding the world could strengthen the faith of mankind.

The personified liberal arts themselves were part of the curriculum too, as a way of transferring the framework of their education to the pupils. A fifteenth-century poem, written by hand on the last page of a manuscript,² is a dialogue between a boy and the seven liberal arts, where they explain their meaning, and the boy answers. Grammar starts:

<p>‘Prima dicit michi verbum cum nomine sono ducere me sivis more cognere bono.’</p>	<p>(First tell me the word with its name and sound, if you want me to ensure that you learn them in the right way).</p>
--	---

After this, Logic asks the boy to explain the meaning, and the other five arts all follow, with Law closing the row behind Astronomy. This poem was meant as a way to learn the names of the arts and what they were about by heart; picturing them as persons was a suitable didactic technique for this, both in text and in art. Other didactic inventions, like depicting the Trivium and Quadrivium as the subsequent stages in the process of baking bread and building a house,³ never became this popular.

When Maarten de Vos sold his series of prints with personifications of the arts throughout the last decades of the sixteenth century, he was not being very original. At least three sets of arts prints after drawings by Maarten de Vos are known, and

² Oxford, St. John's College, ms 92 (Guido delle Colonne, *Historia destructionis Troie*), f 120v.

³ Woodcut as shown by Catteeuw 2003: 15, see: www.psy.kuleuven.ac.be/adhp/meprenten.htm (June 2007).



many by other artists. In another one of De Vos' drawings Grammar is teaching a boy to read, but holding a stick as well, while through a half-opened door three more pupils can be seen.⁴ Personifications of 'antique' notions like the arts, especially in the new 'classicist' style, became extremely popular in the sixteenth century in the Netherlands, and would stay popular for at least two centuries to come. Many of the well-known Dutch and Flemish engravers made series like this, with those of Maarten van Heemskerk probably the best known.⁵ All these sets of prints were probably based on Italian examples, either taken from model books, or seen in Southern Europe where many of the Northern artists spent some time. The liberal arts were also viewed by patrons and buyers as a Renaissance subject, suited for decorating the homes and gardens of those who wanted to show off both education and class.

In sixteenth-century series of prints like this, the theme of the seven liberal arts reached yet another height,⁶ but it had come a long way, including its specific sub-theme of Grammar shown as a teacher, that is one of the most widespread images of education. Based on descriptions in Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis Mercurii et Philologiae* (ninth century) where the arts are presented as wedding gifts to Mercury and Philology,⁷ the theme was shaped on parchment, on walls and in stone from the tenth century onwards. It can be found in various iconographic contexts, but notably often in the decoration programmes of French cathedrals from the twelfth century and of Italian public and elite private buildings from the thirteenth. There is a parallel tradition in manuscripts and early printed books, often illuminating texts mirroring ideas about education. In almost all cases, Grammar is depicted as a woman, as her name in Latin (*grammatica*) is female: Grammar is a mistress. The children she is teaching are usually male, varying from one boy to a whole group of pupils. In most cases Grammar is holding a punishing device, either a rod or a paddle, and the pupils are often equipped with books, writing tablets or alphabet boards. Although usually shown as a friendly teacher, with her arm around the pupil – as in De Vos' depiction – she often still holds the rod.

Within the programme, usually Grammar is the only liberal art depicted with another person as her attribute; the other arts hold objects and/or make gestures. When Maarten de Vos made his drawings, the iconography had long reached a common form, although variations remained possible. A stock example is the

ill. 183. Maarten de Vos, *Arihtmetic, before 1594*. Antwerp, Museum of Arts, *Prints & Drawings*, inv.no. 47.A.VI.8. © IRPA-KIK Brussels, no. B16582.

ill. 184. Maarten de Vos, *Geometry, before 1594*. Antwerp, Museum of Arts, *Prints & Drawings*, inv.no. 46.A.VI.6. © IRPA-KIK Brussels, no. B16583.

ill. 185. Maarten de Vos, *Music, before 1594*. Antwerp, Museum of Arts, *Prints & Drawings*, inv.no. 44.A.VI.4. © IRPA-KIK Brussels, no. B16578.

ill. 186. Maarten de Vos, *Astronomy, before 1594*. Antwerp, Museum of Arts, *Prints & Drawings*, inv.no. 28.A.IV.3. © IRPA-KIK Brussels, no. B16584.

4 Warsaw, National Gallery of Poland, inv.no. 8756.

5 Veldman 1986.

6 Tezmen describes the heyday of the theme in art as the twelfth/thirteenth century in France, the fourteenth/fifteenth in Italy, and the fifteenth/sixteenth in Germany; Tezmen-Siegel 1985: 218.

7 Benazzi and Mancini 2001: 280.

depiction of the arts in Gregor Reisch's book *Margarita philosophica* printed in 1503. Here, the Arts are depicted as the seven daughters of Philosophy and their names are inscribed next to them, so their identity cannot be mistaken (ill. 187). Grammar holds an ABC-board or a book, Logic (or Dialectic) makes hand gestures for meaning, Rhetoric is speaking and holds a document or charter, Arithmetic has a counting board, Music is playing instruments, Geometry is holding compasses and a square, and finally Astronomy (or Astrology) is depicted with an armillary sphere. This would be the common scheme. Often occurring variations are that Dialectic is 'wrestling' snakes indicating that she controls the (hidden) meanings of words – the creatures remaining from Martianus Capella's description⁸ – and that Grammar is often actually teaching, but still with a tablet or book in the picture.

Grammar is not the only personification of an abstract notion depicted as a teacher, but by far the most common. Rarely the virtue *Prudentia* (Prudence) is also teaching, crowned and with pupils holding books at her feet⁹ and also *Temperantia* (Temperance) can be shown as a mistress (see ill. 179).

ill. 187. *Philosophy and the seven liberal arts*, woodcut in Gregor Reisch, *Margarita Philosophica*, Basel 1535. Leiden, Museum Boerhaave, Inst. 322, page 1034. © Museum Boerhaave.



⁸ A good example is in a late twelfth-century copy of Capella's book in Paris, Bibliothèque Ste-Geneviève, ms 1041, f 1v, where Grammar is already equipped with rod and pupil, and Dialectic seated next to her is holding a snake. Also in the fourteenth and fifteenth century, there are often snakes with Dialectica, causing her to be misunderstood as Fortitudo (strength) sometimes.

⁹ Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België, ms 11041 (*La somme de roi*), f 65v.

6.2 The good and the bad pupil

On the southern porch known as the ‘Doorway of the Virgin’ in the western façade of Chartres cathedral, the sculptures of the Madonna and Child are framed by representations of the seven liberal arts. To the bottom right hand side of the tympanum, Grammar can be recognized (ill. 188), next to Music, as a veiled lady with a birching rod, a book and two boys at her feet. Underneath her a bearded man can be seen writing; this is Donatus, the authority on which the knowledge of grammar was, literally, based – Music is supported by Pythagoras for a similar reason. Grammar is accompanied by two children. To her right is a naked boy with an open book, looking up to both the birching rod and the gaze of Grammar. At her left side is a boy in a monk’s habit, bowed over a book in a reading posture. These boys can be identified as the bad and the good pupil. The Chartres sculpture, dated to 1145-1155, is the oldest example of this specific depiction of the pupils of Grammar.

This typical shape of a teaching Grammar with a good and a bad pupil can be studied best in the brightly coloured statues of the seven liberal arts in the entrance hall of the cathedral of Freiburg. They were placed in the entrance hall under the tower on the western side in about 1270-1280, but all of the sculpture was heavily restored in the 1890s.¹⁰ Some attributes were restored then without being understood, but there is no evidence that any of the sculptures is not in its original place. Within an elaborate programme of sculpted persons, the seven liberal arts are personified, as usual, by women holding attributes. Grammar (ill. 189) is holding



ill. 188. *Music and Grammar with authorities on western portal of Chartres cathedral, 1145-1155. © Author.*

¹⁰ Münzel 1959: 9-18.



ill. 189. *Grammar with pupils, on northern porch of Freiburg Cathedral, 1270-1280. © Author.*



ill. 190. *Dialectic and Rhetoric on Freiburg Cathedral. © Author.*

a large green birching rod in her right hand and there are two boys at her feet. The one on her right is in monk's habit with tonsure, reading a book; he is the good one. The one on her left is naked, his habit hanging over his arm. He undressed to be punished; Grammar is holding him by the ear and the bad pupil is looking up, his hand raised in defence. Grammar is looking down at him with a severe look.

Not all of the other arts as depicted on Freiburg cathedral are as undisputed as Grammar, partly because some of their attributes were restored incorrectly. Next to Grammar is Dialectic or Logic, that is arguing with her hands (one in a speaking gesture, the other held up flat); because of this gesture this figure is sometimes interpreted as Arithmetic. Next comes a woman with hand full of gold coins. She is seen as Rhetoric, which would mean that the three arts of the Trivium, the first stage of the arts, would be depicted here (ill. 190). On the other side of the porch is Geometry with a square and a pair of compasses and next to her Music chiming a bell; the identification of these two images is not disputed. Third is a woman with a strange attribute – but the full lower part of her arm with the attribute is a nineteenth-century restoration. The fourth statue looks like a woman with a urine bottle at first, and for this she was seen as Medicine earlier. The object has also been interpreted as an ointment jar identifying the holder as Mary Magdalene. But a closer look¹¹ shows that the glass bottle is overflowing with liquid and the woman does not consider the bottle, but looks away in the distance. This shows that the bottle must be a water clock, an attribute of astrologists: water drips in it for a determined time until it is full, and when full you look at the position of the stars¹² – which is exactly what the figure does. The woman holding the water clock thus must be Astrology. If the third in this row is Arithmetic, maybe holding a counting board that was not understood during the restoration, then these four

¹¹ In August 2004, during the last days of the restoration of the porch, I was allowed to climb the scaffolding and look the statues of the Liberal Arts in the eye; I would like to thank the Bauhütte of the Freiburger Münster for arranging this privilege on the spot.

¹² Münzel 1959: 170-176.



Arts (ill. 191). Together with the Trivium on the other side this accounts for a full scheme of the Seven Liberal Arts.

A limewood statue of Grammar in the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum in Munich (ill. 192) shows Grammar with children at her feet, as in Freiburg. It was made in Southern Germany around 1300, is hollow, and layers of polychrome painting from various periods have been preserved on it. Grammar extends her hands to two pupils at her feet on the base. One holds an open book, in which scratchings including the letters 'ABC' can be read; he looks up to Grammar. The other pupil turns his head away unwillingly; he holds a scroll. Originally the statue contained two more pupils in the middle – there are remains of consoles there and the statue is flat where they have been in front. The statue was repainted many times after these two images got lost. Grammar's head is turned to the right towards the 'good pupil', but no punishment is shown here.

ill. 191. *Music, Geometry and Astronomy on Freiburg Cathedral.*
© Author.

ill. 192. *Grammar with pupils, limewood, c.1300. Munich, National Museum of Bavaria, inv. no. MA 1089. Photo taken from postcard.*

6.3 French cathedrals: Grammar in a stone book

Like those of Chartres and Freiburg, the fronts of all the large Gothic cathedrals in France, most of them still standing, are adorned with complex sculptural programmes that have to be read, explained and understood as books in stone. They have been compared to the calendars that start off a Book of Hours – they both form the entry to the sacred contents inside, and can be used as a guide to those contents; it is not a coincidence that more 'secular' themes like astrology, time and series of personified notions, which were seen as clues to the divine nature of life, are found in calendars and on portals alike.¹³ The seven liberal arts are often

¹³ Wieck 1988; Willemsen 2005: 419.

ill. 193. *Wisdom and the liberal arts on the central portal of the Cathedral of Our Lady in Paris, after 1200. © Author.*



part of the sculptural scheme, allowing a fixed place to a teaching Grammar on the front of many of the major cathedrals: Auxerre, Clermont-Ferrand, Laon, Paris, Reims, Rouen, Sens.

The precise position given to Grammar individually and the arts as a group within the sculpture underlines their value. This is clear when the depiction of a teaching Grammar on the cathedral of Notre-Dame (Our Lady) in Paris is considered. This cathedral, the most famous of all, was built (and decorated) from 1163 onwards. The western front has two towers, a large rose window and three portals, of which the central one, the 'king's doorway' was the most important, only opened on red-letter days. The sculpture of this portal, dated shortly after 1200, has 'wisdom' as its general theme, and the tympanum shows the last judgement, presided over by Christ judging souls. The rest of the programme is there to support this image, both literally and metaphorically.

Between the doors is a statue of Christ holding a book, flanked on the sides of the portal by his twelve apostles. On the left side of the doors are the seven prudent virgins, crowned by an open door and an inviting angel; a personification of 'ecclesia' is aside. On the right side of the doors are the seven foolish virgins, crowned by a closed door, a forbidding angel and the blindfolded personification of 'synagogue'. The lower zone, under the apostles, is filled with a series of virtues and vices on both sides, with a carpet frieze underneath, while on the cornerstones the symbols of the four evangelists hold books. On the middle column, beneath the statue of Christ, are five wise men, with in the lowest zone six liberal arts and



wisdom personified, just above the carpet frieze. In this way, the arts are the central foundation of the whole programme.

On the front of this lowest zone of the central pillar of the central portal (ill. 193) is a *tondo* or roundel with a lady enthroned with sceptre and two books, prominently holding a ladder. This is 'sapientia' or wisdom, who is often described as a 'stairway to God'. On her sides sit Geometry (with a sphere) and Astrology (with a water clock) in rectangular frames, placed diagonally. On the northern flank are roundels with Arithmetic (with compasses, ill. 195) and Dialectic/Rhetoric (with a snake and speaking), and on the southern flank Grammar (with rod and pupil) and Music (chiming bells) in roundels. All arts are in profile, their heads turned towards 'sapientia' at the front, with the exception of Grammar whose head is turned away to the right, towards the pupil.

Grammar (ill. 194) is depicted in a classical toga with a thin veil, covering her head and reaching her shoulders, wrapped around her body. She sits on a bench, holds a long rod made of twigs (clearly visible, see ill. 194) to her shoulder and points with her right index finger in an open book. A small boy seated to her left holds the book with both hands, looking up to his mistress; Grammar is looking down at him. The child with semi-long hair and long tunic sits lower, legs crossed and feet resting on the rim of the sculpture, while his back follows the curve of the roundel. The whole image is 40 cms in diameter, the rod only measures 13.5 cms, with a handle of 5 cms and twigs bound around the handle three times.¹⁴ When the central doors were open, people would pass Grammar on their way into the church; the rod was prominent enough to be seen then too.

In Sens cathedral, the liberal arts are located in a place like that in Paris, as a foundation of the middle portal, to the left of the door. Although badly worn, it is

ill. 194. *Grammar on Notre Dame de Paris.*
© Author.

ill. 195. *Arithmetic on Notre Dame de Paris.*
© Author.

¹⁴ Thanks to Michel François of the 'first floor' of Notre Dame for letting me study the sculptures up close in October 2006.

ill. 196. *Grammar with pupils on the western portal of Sens cathedral, c.1200.*
© Author.



still clear that Grammar, on the west side on the corner, is looking down towards two pupils seated to her left holding books (ill. 196). The faces have been smashed, and there is a lot of damage in the middle part, where an eventual rod would have been. These central positions are significant, but more often the arts are found as part of the western portal, the ‘doorway of the Virgin’, as in Chartres. In all cases they are part of a more complex sculptural programme that is often leaning on them. And they have relations with the depictions in other types of artwork as well: in Clermont-Ferrand, the arts are in a circular scheme of seven roundels in an archivolt, reminiscent of the liberal arts windows in the cathedrals of Auxerre and Laon;¹⁵ the Clermont-Ferrand relief is aptly described as a rose window in stone.

6.4 Italian decorative programmes: Government resting on Grammar

In Italy, the seven liberal arts were part of the intellectual decoration programmes of major secular buildings and works of art, and in that way they can be found in the same sort of context as the planets and the Children of Mercury (see § 5.2). An excellent overview of the Italian representations of the Arts was published by Paolo d’Ancona at the beginning of the twentieth century; later literature on this theme draws heavily on his articles in *L’Arte*.¹⁶ For this chapter, I have concentrated on the depiction of Grammar within the programme of the Seven Liberal Arts, but not without regard to the context of the full group of Arts it functioned in.

¹⁵ Laon c.1180; Auxerre c.1240–1250 see: *CVMA* 1986: 121; a similar rose window in the Ancienne Abbaye St. Pierre in Orbais (distorted heavily) see: *CVMA* 1992: 378–380.

¹⁶ D’Ancona 1902.



ill. 197. *Grammar, detail of pulpit in Siena cathedral, Niccolò Pisano, 1250-1275. Photo taken from postcard.*

Among the earliest representations of Grammar and the Arts in Italy are two creations of the Pisano brothers, for the bases of the pulpits of the Pisa and Siena cathedrals. Interestingly, the iconography of Grammar is treated differently. In Pisa Grammar is depicted feeding two pupils milk from her breasts, an image known from earlier ages, but not so easily recognized, although that her name 'Grammatica' is inscribed above her head. On the pulpit in the cathedral of Siena, sculpted by Niccolò Pisano in the third quarter of the thirteenth century, Grammar is shown teaching a pupil as she should (ill. 197) – no inscription needed.¹⁷ Here, she is seated, with the pupil on her left; her left arm is around him, holding him to her. With her right index finger she points in the opened book she is holding up. The pupil supports the book with his left hand, while he points towards the indicated spot with a small stick. Grammar is accompanied by (counter-clockwise) Dialectics and Rhetoric, then Philosophy with a *cornucopia* (horn of plenty), followed by Arithmetic, Geometry, Music and Astrology, who is sitting on Grammar's right side. The eight ladies, each 45 cms high, sit around a base that supports the middle one of nine columns – four resting on lions, four on the ground – that support the actual pulpit. In this case, the Arts have clearly been placed as basis for the word of the church.

Just a decennium later, around 1278, the liberal arts were sculpted as part of the decorative programme on the large Fontana Maggiore (big fountain) on the square in the middle of the city of Perugia (ill. 198). This impressive fountain is decorated with 50 sculpted panels,¹⁸ each about 50 x 30 cms, grouped two by two; the seven liberal arts are on the side of the Palazzo, arranged counter-clockwise

17 Ayers Bagley, 'Grammar as teacher', part III, see: 'The virtual museum of education Iconics' on http://education.umn.edu/EdPA/iconics/Lecture_Hall/grammar.htm (June 2007).

18 Stok 1996.



ill. 198. *Fontana Maggiore in Perugia, c.1278. Photo taken from postcard.*

ill. 199. *Grammar, detail of the fountain in ill. 198.*
© Author.



ill. 200. *Rhetoric and Arithmetic, detail of the fountain in ill. 198.*
© Author.





ill. 201. *Justice bordered by liberal arts in the Peace Hall in the Palazzo Pubblico of Siena, fresco, Ambrogio Lorenzetti, 1337. Photo taken from: Meoni 2001: 12.*

ill. 202. *Grammar with pupil, detail from border in ill. 201. © Author.*

and shown in three-fourths, with a frontal Philosophy as the eighth relief closing this series. First is Grammar, a lady who sits in a high chair, dressed in a hooded cloak, with a child standing before her (ill. 199). The boy holds a book in which he is pointing, Grammar holds him with one arm and places her other hand on the book. She is shown caring and attentive. Above her is the inscription 'Gramatica'; also the six other arts and 'fylosofia' are labelled. On this fountain, not only the personification of Grammar but also of Rhetoric and Arithmetic (ill. 200) have pupils with them, standing in speech and counting on the fingers respectively. On this fountain, the arts are again part of a complex iconographical programme that shows the intellectual ambitions of the city government.

It is not well known that underneath the world-famous frescoes of Good and Bad Government painted by Ambrogio Lorenzetti in the 'Sala della Pace' (Peace Hall) of the Palazzo Pubblico, the town hall, of Siena in 1337, he painted a frieze with a full set of personifications of the liberal arts and Philosophy and (likely) Theology. It runs directly under the large paintings of Justice on the north wall and



ill. 203. *Reliefs with the liberal arts on the bell-tower of Florence.*
© Author.

ill. 204. *Grammar, original sculpture from the bell-tower of Florence. Florence, Museo dell'Opere del Duomo.* © Author.



‘Buon Governo’ and its result of the arts, women with the usual attributes, are in tetrалobes within diamond-shapes like ‘jewels’ in a frieze of c.50 cms high, all in grey tones against a red background. Nowadays, only five of the arts can be recognized, as the other medallions have deteriorated, but among those well kept is that of Grammar inscribed ‘gramatica’, that with the rest of the Trivium, ‘dyalettica’ and (originally) Rhetoric, borders the painting of Justice. The Quadrivium is underneath Good Government, with the second (‘geometria’), fourth (‘astrologia’) and fifth (‘philosophia’) of originally six medallions still in good condition. Grammar is in a familiar setting, with her arm around one pupil and reading a book together with him (ill. 202). In this hall, the arts are literally the foundations on which government and justice are resting.

In the same decade, between 1337 and 1341, a group of sculptors including Andrea and Nino Pisano and Gino Michele da Castello made the reliefs for the campanile of Florence, the separate bell tower next to the Duomo. Part of a larger programme of reliefs on all four sides of the tower, the seven liberal arts are in lozenge reliefs on the eastern side, above the entrance, in the second zone (ill. 203). From left to



ill. 205. *Grammar, flanked by Donatus and Antonio de Nebrija, on the ceiling of the Escorial Palace near Madrid. Photo taken from: García-Frías and Sancho 2003: 30.*

right we can see Astronomy (with a sphere), Music (with an organ), Geometry (with compasses), then Grammar in the middle, and further Rhetoric (with sword), Logic (with scissors) and Arithmetic (counting on hand). The reliefs executed in white marble and blue majolica on the outside are copies, but in the original place and technique; the original sculptures are now in the Museo dell'Opere del Duomo next to the cathedral. Grammar (ill. 204), a work by Gino Michele da Castello, shows a woman with a headscarf and a whip in her hand, with three or four pupils seated to her left, placed cleverly in the corner of the lozenge frame.

Seen as a whole, the programme of reliefs adorning the campanile is fully dedicated to arts and allegories: on the east side the liberal arts are placed above the applied arts, on the south side virtues above mechanical arts, on the west side planets above agricultural works, and on the north side sacraments above authorities in the arts. This later series of the liberal arts, in six-sided reliefs sculpted by Luca della Robbia a century later (1437-1439), includes another depiction of Grammar, this time personified by a male authority, Priscian, the author of a famous grammar book (see ill. 6). He is shown as a teacher behind a lectern instructing two boys seated opposite, one with a book and one writing. Priscian is pointing towards an open door in the background, indicating that the study of grammar opens the way to more advanced studies.

These images of Grammar with pupils are not exactly in obscure locations – in fact they are on many of the major French Gothic cathedrals and on many of the most prestigious public buildings of medieval Italy still standing. The theme was ‘exported’ into the highest ranks of other societies as well; the liberal arts, for instance, decorate the vault of the library in El Escorial near Madrid, founded by King Philip II of Spain. The frescoes were painted by Pellegrino Tibaldi between 1586 and 1593 in a style reminiscent of Michelangelo’s. The library connects the school with the monastery, and the arts are in between, flanked by Philosophy above the entrance to the school and Theology above that to the cloister. The first section of the vault on the school side is appropriately devoted to Grammar, personified by a classical lady holding a whip and a wreath, surrounded by *putti*

holding a book, a tablet, and a banderole inscribed 'Gramatica'. The lunettes on the sides show classical and contemporary authorities of the art of Grammar: Donatus as an author, behind a lectern, and Spanish humanist and educator Antonio de Nebrija as a teacher, wearing a beret and accompanied by a pupil holding a book (ill. 205).¹⁹

Its popularity in prominent places is due to the fact that the arts, like the 'planet children' of Chapter 5, are a subject of classical knowledge that was transformed in the Early Middle Ages (notably by Capella) into part of an extensive intellectual programme of personifications that could serve as allegories, to picture elements of the Christian Faith in a 'new way'. Next to planets and arts similar sets of personified virtues and vices, muses, ages of man, months of the year, etc. were available. These series could also be used in secular context, where their inclusion in an attractive decorative programme would stress that someone was educated and knew these 'reborn' themes, but was still a good Christian. It is for that reason that the seven liberal arts feature prominently on the public buildings and in the private homes of the elite of Renaissance Italy.

6.5 Foligno: Arts, planets, and the ages of life

The most handsome example of how all these 'classical' themes could go together as a 'display of humanist culture',²⁰ can be found in the 'Sala delle Arti Liberali e dei pianeti' (Hall of the liberal arts and planets), mentioned in c.1430 as the 'Camera delle Rose' (chamber of the roses, after the family emblem that decorated the walls) in the Palazzo Trinci in Foligno. The room was painted in the beginning of the fifteenth century – at the same time as the Sala della Ragione in Padova (see § 5.2) – under the 'direction' of the humanist Francesco da Fiano.²¹ The paintings were covered in plaster later on and discovered only in 1918-1919 – long after Paolo d'Ancona had published his overview of the Arts. Despite some damage and a lot of restoration, this might still be the best preserved and the least known example of a series of Arts depicted anywhere. Only recently was the artist of these beautiful paintings identified as Gentile da Fabriano, based on documents found in the course of the latest restoration.²²

The Arts are in the left part of the room (when you walk through the house) on part of the west wall, the north wall and part of the east wall. The series starts with Grammar on the east wall, left of the chimney, and is read basically from both short ends towards the north, ending in the middle of the north wall. *Grammatica* is a young woman who teaches a youngster to read. To her left is *Dialectica*, an old woman strangling snakes (as a symbol for handling the meaning of words) and in the corner *Musica* with chimes and an organ played by a boy (ill. 208). On the right-hand part of the north wall (ill. 207) is *Geometria* with a circle segment, in the middle thrones *Filosofia*, 'queen of the arts', and on the left-hand side is *Astronomia* with book and sphere. In the corner of the west wall is *Arithmetica*, who is helping a pupil to count on his fingers, and left of her *Rhetorica*, an old woman with a book and a stick, disputing with a boy standing before her (ill. 206).

Grammar is shown as a gentle mistress, teaching a young boy with curly hair and a pink tunic standing before her the first beginnings of reading (ill. 209). With her left hand, she is holding the wrist of the child, directing his untrained hand that is holding an indicating stick towards the character 'A' beside the sign of the cross opening the alphabet in his book. With her other hand, Grammar is supporting

19 García-Frías and Sancho 2003: 28–30, depiction of De Nebrija on p. 30. Thanks to Ineke van Beek for bringing these paintings to my attention.

20 Benazzi and Mancini 2001: 279.

21 Galassi 1991: 37.

22 Benazzi 2001: 137.



ill. 206. *Rhetoric and Arithmetic in Camera delle Rose in the Palazzo Trinci in Foligno, fresco, Gentile da Fabriano, early fifteenth century. © Author.*



ill. 207. *Astronomy, Philosophy and Geometry in Foligno. © Author.*



ill. 208. *Music, Dialectic, and Grammar in Foligno. © Author.*

ill. 209. *Grammar, detail*
from fresco in ill. 208.
Photo taken from postcard.



the boy's left hand that is holding the book. The book is painted in great detail: on the left-hand page the 'Pater noster' (the Lord's prayer) can be read, on the right-hand page both the alphabet and the 'Ave Maria' (the Hail Mary). Grammar is shown as a mature woman in a Roman gown, in conformity with the description in *De nuptiis Phililogiae et Mercurii* by Martianus Capella,²³ on which the depictions were originally based. The other arts follow Martianus's scheme too, but the youths accompanying Arithmetic, Rhetoric, Music and Astronomy are not in the text.

All personifications are provided with four-line verses (quatrains or *canzoni*) in which the arts explain themselves, addressing the reader/viewer. Most of the inscriptions are somewhat damaged and, in particular, the first letters of sentences, that were in red, have vanished, but they could be reconstructed because they were based on texts known otherwise, such as the *Convivio* by Dante and the *Documenti d'Amore* by Francesco de'Barberini. The verse of Grammar is reconstructed as follows:

'Primo instrum[en]to a philosophiche [arte]	(First instrument to the art of philosophy
Gramatica son io che ben dispo[no]	I am Grammar that well supplies
[C]ongruità [et] d'oration le parte	similarity and the parts of prayer
[et] nelle voci dolce accento [et] [sono]'	and the accent and sound in soft voices.)

The verse of Arithmetic who speaks about her sisters, the other Arts, reads:

'Mathematica son vera scienza	(Mathematics is real science
[e]n numerare tucte addunation[i]	in counting all the additions
Le mie sorelle non posson far sença	My sisters cannot do without
[m]io [num]erar[e] et multiplicationi'	my countings and multiplications.) ²⁴

23 Benazzi and Mancini 2001: 282.

24 Benazzi and Mancini 2001: 406-411.



ill. 210. *Moon, Old Age, Mars and Infancy in Foligno.* © Author.

The boy learning grammar is depicted as much younger than the disciples shown with Arithmetic and Rhetoric.²⁵ The various ages are indicated by their faces, posture and clothing. The boy learning to read wears the short tunic and hose worn by children (like in the depiction of ‘infantia’ in the same room, see ill. 210) and is bareheaded showing his reddish curly hair; the others wear long robes and complicated headwear. The advancing age reflects practice, as grammar was the first discipline to be taught and functioned as a basis to the other, more advanced arts. The arts themselves are placed in this hierarchy as well, with Philosophy as the central figure, seated higher up than the liberal arts, flanked by the two ‘highest’ arts of the Quadrivium, Geometry and Astrology, in their turn flanked by the minor Quadrivial arts of Arithmetic (the basis for geometry) and Music; the ‘propaedeutic’ arts of the Trivium are at even more distance, with Rhetoric and Dialectics first and Grammar as the furthest away from the centre – as the most ‘trivial’.

Apart from the personifications of the arts, the room holds larger-than-life-sized depictions of personified planets, combined with the hours of the day and the ‘hours’ of life in tondi. These paintings cover the southern half of the room. On the east wall, right next to the chimney, on a cart drawn by white horses is Luna, the moon, accompanied by the rising sun and ‘decrepitas’, the last phase in man’s life before death. The moon is followed by Mars, with Aurora (the first light) and in a tondo ‘infantia’, the first age of life, depicted as a toddler riding a hobby-horse (ill. 210). On the south wall is Mercury, with the sun in the third hour (terts) and ‘pueritia’, the second phase of childhood, as a young girl looking at herself in a mirror. Next to him is Jupiter, with the sun at its highest (sextes) and ‘adolescencia’ as a young man, presenting a wreath to ‘pueritia’. On the west wall was Venus, with ‘giovinezza’ as a young woman educating a child and the sun in the ninth hour (nones), but most of this painting has disappeared, like Saturn that was next to her, with ‘maturità’ and the vespers. Finally, in the middle of the west wall – bordering Rhetoric – is the Sun on a cart drawn by red horses, with old age and the completes, the end of life and of the day. The planets are not in their Ptolemaic order, but in the order of the days of the week,²⁶ that in Italian – as in many languages – clearly draw their names from the planets: luna-day, mars-day, mercury-day, up till Sun-day. The order the planets are in, stresses how time is the dominant factor in this cycle.

²⁵ Galassi 1991: 38.

²⁶ Galassi 1991: 40.

The decoration of this room is clearly a programme, and its 'didactic' nature is underlined by the verses inscribed underneath the depictions of the arts, planets, hours and ages of man. With respect to content the programme is related to that on, for instance, the Fontana Maggiore in Perugia, although zodiac signs are missing here, but iconographically and textually it shows pre-eminently the influence of the *Documenti d'Amore* of Francesco de'Barberini. The ages of life in the tondi are indeed very close to those in the manuscripts of the *Documenti* in the Vatican Library,²⁷ where infancy is riding a hobby-horse too. C. Galassi found the idea behind this image in the poem *Saporetto* by Simone Prodenziani, a poet from Orvieto, who wrote on 'infanzia':

'Dopo tre anni comença a cavalcare/
sopra la canna e questo è il suo ronçino/
Non avendo pensier de nullo afare'.²⁸

(After three years he starts to ride/
on a stick and that is his mount/
He does not have to think of other things).

In the life cycle, these first playful steps of the child precede the first steps of education, shown by Grammar on the other side of the room.

Not only this room, but the whole decoration of the palazzo is a 'summa', an intellectual programme. Apart from these arts, planets and ages, in other rooms personified virtues, exemplary emperors and heroes can be found, all provided with inscriptions; a lot could be 'learned' walking these halls. In a corridor at the far end of the palazzo, there is another series of colourful, man-size depictions of the seven ages of man, with short captions in French. These are on one side, while the other has a series of famous men; the paintings are partly showing underneath an older series of the same theme of the ages of man in grey tones that covered the whole corridor when it was shorter. In both series, childhood is depicted playing with a spinning top. These paintings, in a remote place within the building, show clearly how every inch of these walls was incorporated in a scheme showing off the intellectual baggage and aspirations of the Trinci family. This is precisely the kind of context in which Grammar as a teacher functioned.

6.6 Secular arts, sacred arts

In this humanistic environment, not only secular but also ecclesiastical power – that was equally engaged in worldly matters – was showing off scholarship and erudition. A demonstration of the prestige of the programme of liberal arts within the context of a church can be seen in the complicated, large fresco-painting by Andrea Bonaiuto, called Andrea da Firenze, in the church of Santa Maria Novella – next to the train station of the same name – in Florence. In the so-called Capella Spagnoli or Spanish Chapel he painted *The Triumph of Thomas Aquinas* in the two years after 1365 (ill. 211). Here, the arts are again shown as foundations of the theological programme of the church. Knowledge is depicted according to the theological canon, as a divine blessing, following Thomas Aquinas' (1225-1275) ideas that orientating on and knowing all creation is the way to God.²⁹

The Arts are on the right side underneath the depiction of Thomas, larger-than-life-sized personifications seated in niches, flanked in the left half of the fresco by Philosophy, secular and canon Law and the four disciplines of Theology. In the pendentives above all fourteen are personifications of the planets, while under their seats are men as authorities on the specific arts, like Priscian with Grammar

27 Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cod.Barb.lat. 4076, f 1v; Cod.Barb.lat. 4077, f 1v (other copy); Cod.Barb.lat. 3953, f 126v (in an anthology).

28 Galassi 1991: 45.

29 Kluckert 1999.



ill. 211. *Triumph of St. Thomas, fresco in the Spanish Chapel of the Church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence, Andrea da Firenze, 1366-1367. © Author.*



ill. 212. *The seven liberal arts (Grammar on the right), detail of the fresco in ill. 211. © Author.*

– all images were once inscribed with their names and PRISCIANO is still legible. Lady Grammar is furthest right (ill. 212), on the edge of the image. Dressed in green and with her hair pinned up, she is instructing three pupils seated at her left knee with their backs placed in the arch of the frame. With her right hand, Grammar is pointing through the dividing arch towards Dialectic seated to her right, thus stressing her role as starting point for the other Arts.

This 'summa theologia' of Thomas Aquinas is also the subject of one the frescoes by Filippo Lippi in the Carafa chapel in the church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva behind the Pantheon in Rome, completed in 1493.³⁰ The cycle is centred around an image of the assumption of the Virgin surrounded by angel musicians on the back (south) wall, supervised by the ancient wisdom of the sibyls of Delphi, Hellespont,

³⁰ Geiger 1986; Vitiello 2003.



ill. 213. *Triumph of St. Thomas, fresco in the Carafa Chapel of the Church of Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome, Filippo Lippi, 1493.*
© Author.

Cuma and Tiburtina on the ceiling. Above the altar against the back wall, Thomas Aquinas is depicted presenting cardinal Carafa to the Virgin of the Annunciation. On the left (east) wall, destroyed in the sixteenth century when a tomb was placed there, was a fresco showing the battle of the virtues against the vices. On the right (west) wall is the story of the cross talking to Thomas Aquinas, with beneath it the triumph or 'dispute' of Thomas, where he is shown preceding over all pre-Christian wise men. These walls were intentionally juxtaposed: in Thomas, Faith had overcome all heresy, like Virtue gained victory over all evil.³¹

In the fresco showing Thomas's victory (ill. 213), he has been put on a throne with a defeated and bound personification of barbarism at his feet. The throne is supported by personifications of Philosophy, Theology, Dialectic and Grammar, four disciplines and arts carefully chosen out of the available range to emphasize the specific way to the triumph of faith: for that, it is necessary to be able to read words first (grammar) and to understand their meaning (dialectic), to study philosophy, which leads to an understanding of theology in the end. Grammar, a woman in classical dress, depicted in discussion with Dialectic, is equipped with a pointing stick, while her hand protects the head of the male pupil seated at her feet who is holding a writing tablet with the alphabet (ill. 214).

Lippi painted the frescoes in 1488-1492 as a commission from Cardinal Oliviero Carafa, one of the mighty powers behind the papal throne of that period. Although the chapel was clearly intended to be the cardinal's final resting place, he was eventually buried in his native Naples.

At the very same moment, in 1492, Pope Alexander VI (Alessandro Borgia) pulled Pinturicchio away from his work in the Duomo of Orvieto to make him decorate the Papal apartment (the 'Appartamento Borgia') in the Vatican Palace; in 1494 the

³¹ See: Bertelli 1965: 116-118.



painter concluded his work there by signing the depiction of Rhetoric, in a room with a series of large frescoes depicting the seven liberal arts. In this 'Sala degli Arti Liberali', Grammar, as the first of the arts, is painted above the original entrance (ill. 215). She is holding a book and is surrounded by scholars, among them presumably Donatus, but men in contemporary dress holding books as well. There is no pupil

ill. 214. Grammar with pupil holding alphabet tablet, detail from fresco in ill. 213. Photo taken from postcard.



ill. 215. Grammar, fresco, Pinturicchio, 1492-1494. Sala degli Arti Liberali. Vatican City, Vatican Palace, Borgia apartment. Photo taken from: Pietrangeli 1996: 227.



ill. 216. *Tomb monument for Pope Sixtus IV, Antonio Pollaiuolo, 1493. Vatican City, St. Peter's Church, Treasure. © Author.*

ill. 217. *Grammar, detail from the monument in ill. 216. © Author.*



with her, but the *putto*-like child in the foreground holding a large writing tablet (*tabula*) with the inscription 'GRAMATICA' written into black wax may well be a residue of that imaging tradition; no *putti* holding tablets are included in the other paintings. Those all show females enthroned in the company of scholars and have been called humanistic versions of 'Sacred conversations'³² (paintings with the Madonna surrounded by saints popular in this era). Arithmetica, on the facing wall, is depicted holding a counting board; in both frescoes many of the surrounding men hold pens as well as books, in left and right hands.

Because of the decorative theme of the liberal arts, it has been suggested that the room may have functioned as a private study.³³ Its position in front of what was presumably the pope's bedroom made it a logical place for him to work in, and it is possible that Alexander's large collection of books was housed here. The contemporary scholars portrayed in the paintings could well be persons from the humanistic circles around this notably eloquent pope (under whose papacy the Sapienza in Rome and other universities flowered), whose own portrait is therefore in the painting with Rhetoric. Pinturicchio was here too: his signature is on the throne of this art of speech. The room with the arts is known to have been used as a dining hall for guests; that Pinturicchio signed his work in this room also indicates that it was regularly visited.

As seen many times by now, in Alexander's decorative programme the liberal arts were in good company of other representations like muses and planets with their children (see ill. 175); in the adjacent 'Sala delle Sibille' the pope (with the tiara) is depicted as a son of the Sun. Astrology was a subject favoured by many popes, often in connection with Theology. Sixtus IV claimed that his pontificate had been predicted by astrologers, and both the earlier Borgia Palace and the modern 'Sala dei Pontifici' in the Vatican hold ceilings with planets and stars.³⁴

³² Poeschel 1995: 185.

³³ Poeschel 1995: 81.

³⁴ Poeschel 1995: 198-200 and 235.

At about the same moment, again, Antonio Pollaiuolo sculpted the elaborate bronze funeral monument of the already mentioned Pope Sixtus IV. It was commissioned by Giulio della Rovere, Sixtus's successor as pope, and dated 1493 behind the head of the reclining figure who is in the middle at the top of the tomb (ill. 216). Sixtus is surrounded by personifications of the seven virtues and coats of arms. On the lowest zone around these are ten personifications: the seven liberal arts with 'Prospectiva' in between and Philosophy and Theology added. Grammar, at the side of the pope's feet with the other arts of the Trivium, is accompanied by two pupils (ill. 217). She is a classical lady, reclining and with bare bosom, a cloak draped around her legs and arm. Behind her a girl is standing with an open book; a somewhat smaller boy is reading a book that he rests on the left knee of Grammar.

Also the other arts are reclining ladies, depicted with their usual attributes; it is worth noting that Arithmetic is holding a tablet with two holes at the top, that must be interpreted as a counting board; it is of the same shape as the tablets depicted in the Borgia apartments (also with Arithmetic) and in the Ducal Palace of Urbino (with Grammar's apprentice, see ill. 222). The monument's decoration is not only full of details, but also full of text, and the panel with Grammar is not an exception. In the book that the girl in the background holds up, a Latin job description of Grammar can be read:

'DIVERSORV IDIOMATVM HOMINES
DOCIO VT VUNO DVM TAXAT
IDIOMATE SIMVL OMNES LOQVANTVR'

(I teach words to the people so they can
speak at least one language all together).

On the right-hand page of the boy's book it reads simply 'A B C D E F' (and the beginnings of a G); he is clearly learning the alphabet. It has often been suggested that the decoration, with 'secular, half-naked ladies', was not very well-suited for a pope. However, the programme must be understood as a careful choice which presents the deceased pope as a man of virtue and wisdom.

Moreover, the theme was considered fit for a pope much earlier. It had already appeared on a *fimbria* (maniple) of Pope Clemens IV, who was elected in 1265 and died in Viterbo in 1268. After his funeral monument in the church of Santa Maria in Gradi there was opened during work in 1737, a report was sent to Rome, that included the first descriptions and drawings of the body and paraments still intact inside.³⁵ When in 1885 the tomb was dismantled, the skeleton was found, still covered in the paraments that were preserved by the lead lining of the wooden coffin. The paraments were then documented and photographed before being placed back into the tomb. In World War II the remains were displaced, and it is not sure how much is left of the paraments now; the *fimbria* with the arts, however, does remain.³⁶

Among the funeral dress of Pope Clemens was a silk *alba* over which these *fimbriae* were worn around the neck, forming vertical bands at the front; when worn, the decoration of the *fimbriae* was thus very much in sight. The maniple is decorated with a frieze of half palmets with seven arches framing representations of the seven liberal arts accompanied by assistants or pupils and identified by inscriptions. In the middle was Philosophy; her inscription is illegible as the textile is worn the most here – which makes sense, as the *fimbria* was folded there, both when in use and in the coffin. She is flanked on the left side by 'arismetica' and 'geometria', on the right by 'musica' and 'astrologia', while the outer arches contain 'dialectica' and 'gramatica'.

35 Miglio 1996.

36 Piferi 1996: 25-30.



ill. 218. *Maniple with seven liberal arts, from the tomb of Pope Clemens IV in Viterbo, 1268. Drawing taken from: Piferi 1996: 39.*

ill. 219. *Grammar on chalice with seven liberal arts, French, fifteenth century. Milan cathedral, Treasury, inv.no. 1390. Photo taken from: Bossaglia and Cinotti 1978: Tav. 106.*



Philosophy is shown frontally, holding books, flanked by two standing pupils with their noses in their books, while the arts are in profile, with each a disciple standing before them. Grammar is shown gesticulating with the pupil before her, as if entangled in a discussion; there is no punishing device here (ill. 218). The presence of the pupils stresses the idea of education, specifically identifying the liberal arts as teachers. The embroidery is quite lively and reads not so much as a stiff allegory, but more as a fairly realistic depiction with people busy around an enthroned queen.³⁷

This rare late-thirteenth century piece of decorated parament is the first work in which the ‘profane’ theme is recorded in a papal context. This original choice of Pope Clemens IV has been explained by the scholarly climate in Viterbo at the time.³⁸ Indeed it is a constant throughout the following centuries that the Arts were evidentially considered an appropriate theme in times and places where scholarship was seen – and shown – as important; how ‘secular’ or ‘sacred’ we would describe these contexts nowadays is not the point.

³⁷ Piferi 1996: 32.

³⁸ Piferi 1996: 34.



ill. 220. Pewter dish with the liberal arts, Caspar Enderlein, end sixteenth century. Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, inv.no. OM 99. © Author.

As the *fimbria* from Viterbo shows, the liberal arts were also used in the decoration of art objects, both from liturgical and secular contexts. The treasury of the cathedral of Milan holds a beautiful French ivory chalice (24 cm high) decorated with the seven liberal arts and Medicine in ten niches, two of which have been used for the depiction of Grammar and two for that of Rhetoric as well. The personification of Grammar is seated holding the rod, while in the flanking niche her two pupils are seated with a book, a third larger person standing behind them (ill. 219). Rhetoric is depicted as a monk speaking to three young monks. This specific piece of decorative art looks a lot like the sculptures on French cathedrals – the gothic chalice is like a portable version of a portal. This chalice was made in France in the early fourteenth century, with the base added in c.1570 on the orders of Carlo Borromeo. The chalice was part of the treasury of the ducal chapel in San Gottardo in 1440 and owned by Ludovico il Moro in 1498;³⁹ its ownership like its iconography shows a combination of the secular and the sacred. The chalice has a more private counterpart in Italian glass tazzas decorated with the liberal arts; a fragment from one of these was excavated as far north as Bois-le-Duc.⁴⁰

One of the most popular types of objects with the seven liberal arts are large circular metalwork dishes, suitable for serving fruit or as decorative pieces in themselves; they often come with a matching pitcher decorated with virtues. They functioned in elite households of the late sixteenth century, possibly during receptions or dinner parties, that were an outstanding context for showing off ‘new’

³⁹ Milan, Duomo, Tesoro, inv.no. 1390, see: Bossaglia and Cinotti 1978: 53, Tav. 104-116.

⁴⁰ Bois-le-Duc, from the Postelstraat, see: Janssen 1983: 244.

knowledge and ‘modern’ style, both in the luxurious execution and in the clever contents of these objects. Made in gold, silver, and pewter, they all have a remarkably similar decoration. The seven liberal arts and Philosophy are in horizontally placed oval frames on the outside rim, and the inside rim shows other allegorical depictions, often with Temperance on the central medallion. The decorative plaquettes on these dishes look so much alike that they must have been made using moulds that in their turn may have been based on model books. Of some of the dishes, especially the most precious ones, the goldsmith that created it is known. Specimens in pewter⁴¹ were much cheaper versions, which may betray a high-class civic household imitation of elite life (ill. 220). The personification of Grammar on these dishes always holds an alphabet tablet and is often writing, but is seldom in the company of pupils – a child with a book is with Grammar on a gold dish in Écouen nonetheless.⁴² Grammar had been on her own before, but in applied art of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, like appliques, medals and small bronzes, this iconographic type became the rule. As Grammar is less clearly conceived as a teacher, we can leave the track there and return to monumental art.

Rimini: A profane church

In the mid-fifteenth century, Rimini on Italy’s east coast was ruled by the powerful (but hardly undisputed) duke Sigismondo Malatesta. His major project, the Tempio Malatestiano, further illustrates how worldly and divine matters could be intertwined in the Renaissance, and how the Arts played a part in this. Sigismondo employed sculptors from Florence to turn the thirteenth-century church of San Francesco (St. Frances) into a white marble temple (he uses the word himself) where he and his loved one, Isotta, could be – and still lie – buried. On the short inscription hewn into the frieze on the temple front is the date of completion: 1450.⁴³ Pope Pius II accused Malatesta of having ‘paganized’ the church, where now Sigismondo and Isotta were venerated instead of God.⁴⁴

Inside, there are eight chapels, arranged in pairs (left and right). All the square columns have been decorated with shiny white marble plaquettes executed in low relief. Some of these depict biblical stories and saints, but most show selections from the ‘pagan’ vocabulary like playing *putti*, trophies and triumphs, zodiac signs and planet gods, sibyls and virtues, and muses and liberal arts. Sigismondo’s tomb is in the first chapel on the right; the last chapel on this side is dedicated to the Holy Sacrament but called ‘Capella degli Arti Liberali’ because of its decoration. Malatesta viewed the whole church as a sepulchral monument, where the arts and sciences would forever escort him.

The arts are depicted in an almost classical Greek style, as ladies with elongated bodies in swirling togas, framed by Greek columns and garlands. Because of this style, they are not easily identified at first sight. Grammar (ill. 221) is accompanied by a pupil depicted much smaller than herself; a tall Grammar is pointing in a book that is held up by a boy barely reaching her hip and wearing a very short tunic. Arithmetic is holding a counting board and also the other arts hold attributes. Although the execution is very ‘Renaissance’ in the literal sense: falling back on classical art, the iconography of Grammar is similar to earlier Italian depictions, like the thirteenth-century reliefs on the Perugia fountain and the fourteenth-century painted *grisailles* in the town-hall of Siena (see ill. 199 & 202).

In this Rimini chapel the seven liberal arts are in the company of plaquettes with Philosophy, Concord (joining the hands of a boy and girl), Ethics (with four

41 For instance pewter dishes: Écouen, Musée National de la Renaissance, inv.no. E.CI.500b, made in Paris at the end of the sixteenth century; 500a is a matching pitcher; Paris, Musée du Petit Palais, inv.no. ODUT01428 (1-2, the second is a pitcher), made in France c.1600 from models attributed to François Briot; Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, inv.no. OM 99, made by Caspar Enderlein.

42 Écouen, Musée National de la Renaissance, on display without inv.no., gold (Christ surrounded by the Arts).

43 Burmeister 1891: 5-7.

44 Seznec 1961: 135.



ill. 221. *Grammar, relief in Tempio Malatestiano in Rimini, 1540. Photo taken from: D'Ancona 1902: 270.*

little girls at her feet), Dance, and Apollo, god of the arts. Also, there are panels devoted to the four *Artes Mechanicæ*, the earth-tied or 'unfree' arts. These were an elaboration of the scheme of the liberal arts, invented to include other professions; they are seldom depicted, although some manuscripts have them following the liberal arts (see below). Their canon is not as crystallized as that of the first seven arts; here they include Agriculture (sowing from a basket, with hoe and flowers), Botany (by a bush), Architecture (with measuring rod and plummet) and History (with trumpet and book).⁴⁵ Malatesta's 'sculpted book' is very full, and its style is as classical as possible, but in respect to content it shows the same 'mix' of sources as the portals of French cathedrals and, indeed, many other encyclopaedic programmes on buildings and in books.

6.7 Urbino: Federico da Montefeltro showing the arts

Grammar and five other liberal arts are also part of the decoration programme of the Ducal Palace of Urbino, built for the Montefeltro family in the fourteenth century and largely decorated anew during the rule of Federico da Montefeltro at the end of the fifteenth century. The Palazzo Ducale is rightly famous foremost for the impressive *studiolo* (study room) of Federico that was decorated c.1500. In the upper zone is a large series of portraits of scholars from Antiquity and Federico's time alike, including contemporary schoolmaster Vittorino da Feltre, painted

⁴⁵ Brandi 1956: 127-143 (all depicted).

ill. 222. *Grammar with pupil, intarsia panel in doors to the Soprallogge in the Ducal Palace of Urbino, attributed to Francesco di Giorgio Martini, end fifteenth century. © Author.*



mainly by Joos van Gent – taken as loot by Napoleon, they are now divided over the Musée du Louvre in Paris and the Galleria Barberini in Rome. In the lower zone is, still in place, the most beautiful *intarsio* or wood-inlay, patterned as a *trompe l'oeil* giving the impression that the small room is full of cabinets holding all kinds of study objects. Among the wood-inlay cabinets there is one holding writing equipment, with some books, some blank sheets and a quill in an inkwell with Federico's name (see ill. 37). The very presence of this room, next to a then-world-famous library, and strengthened by the way it was decorated, clearly shows Federico's ambitions of presenting himself, one of the most powerful men in Italy at the time, pre-eminently as a scholar.

In the same *intarsio* technique two sets of doors were made for the Palazzo showing triumphs of virtues and love, a popular intellectual theme at the time, with the liberal arts on the back side.⁴⁶ These doors separate the 'Sala degli Angeli' from the 'Soprallogge' or 'Sala delle Udienze' (audience room),⁴⁷ closing off Federico's 'private' complex (the *studiolo*, a small temple dedicated to the muses and a Christian chapel) from the more representative rooms of the palace. On the side of the 'Soprallogge' the two large doors are divided into three panels each, showing representations of (left to right, bottom to top) Dialectics and Grammar, Arithmetic/Geometry and Rhetoric, and Astrology and Music. To reach a total of six panels, it was decided to do just one representation of the mathematic sciences (as on Notre Dame cathedral

⁴⁶ See: Rotondi 1951: vol. 2, p. 332 and 422-424; Dal Poggetto 2003: 154 (fig. 161).

⁴⁷ Cheles 1986: 58.

in Paris, see § 6.3). The wood inlay is attributed to Francesco di Giorgio Martini (1439-1502) and dated to the end of the fifteenth century.

Grammar is depicted in the now familiar posture of teaching a child to read (ill. 222). She is a young woman in classical dress, a scarf in her hair. On her left side a young boy is standing, dressed in a short tunic, hose and low shoes. He is holding a double writing tablet (with two holes at every short side for carrying) in both hands and is looking down onto it. Grammar rests her left hand on the boy's shoulder, while pointing on the tablet with two fingers of her other hand; she is looking down too. The depiction is of a very gentle atmosphere. None of the other arts is presented with a pupil here: Dialectic holds snakes, Rhetoric has a tablet or book and is talking, Arithmetic/Geometry is drawing with a pair of compasses, Music plays the organ helped by a page, and Astrology is holding a book and globe. From a humanistic⁴⁸ programme like Federico's, the Arts could not be absent. It is not too far-fetched to imagine Federico, who employed the Dutch mathematician and astrologer Paulus van Middelburg as a private tutor to his son Guidobaldo,⁴⁹ pointing out the gentle mistress of Grammar on the door to his son (and to the teacher) while going through the palace.

Compared with French cathedrals and Italian public buildings, the rooms in the Palazzi described above had a more private character, and the decoration with the liberal arts could not be viewed by everyone. That does not mean that it was meant for private use in a modern sense; it was there to be seen and shown, but only to those invited and when the owner chose to do so. It is therefore like the depictions of liberal arts in manuscripts. As works of art much more private than a palazzo room, manuscripts were nonetheless not meant for use by one person only; the manuscripts too were shown to others.

Federico's library in the Ducal Palace of Urbino, rightly famous in his time, contained many manuscripts that coped with the same humanist themes: classical texts, astrology, 'new knowledge'. Many of them were illuminated in Italy by the top artists of the time, showing the same 'classical' subjects we saw in the palatial decorations, including triumphs and personifications. Thus, it is not a surprise that Grammar and her sisters could be encountered in his books as well. Most of the Urbino library ended up in the Vatican Library as an impressive collection of 'Codices Urbinatis', enabling researchers to reconstruct the humanist world of thoughts of Federico and its sources even better.

One of his manuscripts is a reflection of an otherwise lost aspect of the elite method of showing off knowledge, in temporary architecture and decorations for celebrations and parties. The manuscript dated 1480⁵⁰ holds the designs for the wedding procession of Costanzo Sforza and Camilla of Aragon, thus reflecting creations presented to the public as *tableaux*, sometimes *tableaux vivants*, on wagons. It must be assumed that the designs were understood by the audience, helped here and there by banderoles with names. The parade opened with a ship and a triumph of modesty, followed by a fountain spurting wine, a Virgin Mary, and over 20 wagons with personifications of classical gods, muses and legendary figures like the 'Regina Ebraea' (Hebrew Queen) riding an elephant. A real camel led by a driver carried a child who scattered rice from baskets. Very near the end of the parade, there was a 'Mons Elicon' (Mount Helicon) with Orpheus surrounded by dancing girls; the plateau with the mountain was supported by three ladies in classical gowns with garlands: Astronomy, Rhetoric and Grammar, respectively equipped with an

48 Zampetti 1951: 18.

49 Prinz and Beyer 1987: 238.

50 Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cod. Urb. lat. 899.

ill. 223. *Grammar with pupils in Martianus Capella, Italian, fifteenth century. Vatican City, Apostolic Vatican Library, ms. Urb.lat. 329, f 25v.*
© BAV.



armillary sphere, a sheet and fiddle, and a banderole inscribed 'GRAM[M]ATICA EST SCIENTIA' (Grammar is an art). Behind them, only a globe with zodiac signs, a triumph of Love and a triumph of Fame followed. Within the programme of the procession, the arts and astrology were of great importance.

Of course, Federico owned a copy of the very source of the representations of the liberal arts, *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* by Martianus Capella, too: a large (35.1 x 24 cms) manuscript written and illuminated in Italy in the fifteenth century.⁵¹ The book holds seven freestanding depictions of the arts at the beginning of the relevant chapters, in a combination of ink drawing and watercolour: Grammar on f 25v, Dialectic on 45v, Rhetoric on 64v, Geometry on 88r, Arithmetic on 113r, Astronomy on 131v and Music on 149r; apart from these only the title page is decorated, with *putti* and an author portrait of Capella. It is especially clear from the text surrounding the image on the page of rhetoric that the drawings were made first, before the text was written.

Grammar (ill. 223) is depicted seated on a bench, in a tunic and a cloak that covers her head. In her right hand she holds a punishing device, a thick lath or bundle with eight straps around it and a handle. In her left hand she is presenting a dish holding all the items necessary for learning grammar: a ointment bottle – for smoothing voices, as Capella's text says – and a whip, sheet, inkwell, pen and penknife; the last item may also be a tongue scraper, again referring to the text. Before her, three boys are sitting on a bench, wearing short tunics with hose and reading in books. The three boys have different clothes and hairstyles, which may indicate that they represent advancing ages, with the oldest on the right, wearing a cloak.

⁵¹ Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cod.Urb.lat. 329.



ill. 224. *The liberal arts, Livre de Fortune, French, sixteenth century. Paris, National Library of France, ms fr 25430, f 1v. © BNF.*

see a picture of Grammar). Somewhat later, the authorities are mentioned:

‘Magna donatus me soluit parte peritus
Auctor prescianus totam me scribit opimus.’

(Able Donatus enlightens me partly
Sublime teacher Priscian writes me all).

On folio 45r, this book on grammar is ended:

‘Minei Martiani Felicis Capella Afri
Cartaginiensis de arte grammatica:

(This says Martianus Felix Capella from
Carthago in Africa about the art of



ill. 225. *The liberal arts, Grammaire et Figures, French, sixteenth century. Paris, National Library of France, ms fr 151, f 1r. © BNF.*

liber tertius explicatur: Incipitur liber quartus de arte dilectica.’

grammar: book three ends here: here begins book four on the art of dialectic).

A comparable image of a ‘classical’ Grammar, holding up a book and a tablet with necessities for teaching her art (including an inkwell) to two small boys equipped with books and presenting written sheets, is in an Italian manuscript in the Marciana library of Venice.⁵²

6.8 Grammar in manuscripts

Group portraits of the arts

In some French manuscripts, all the arts are shown together within one miniature, as in a group portrait. Being personifications with attributes, they lent themselves to this kind of treatment. The only decoration of a French *Livre de fortune* of c.1500⁵³ shows such a group portrait of the seven liberal arts with Philosophy and Theology on its title page (ill. 224). It is a conveniently arranged summary of the scheme because it is restricted to its basics here. The arts are placed on a red-, white- and green-tiled floor within a brick wall covered by a dark-brown carpet, against the background of a *mille fleurs* floral tapestry decorated with scenes from the Old

⁵² Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, ms lat cl. XIV 35, f 24v, see: D’Ancona 1902: 282.

⁵³ Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, ms fr 25430, f 1v.



Testament. A woman stands before the ‘painting’, as if showing it to us; underneath is a large banner with an introduction to the book. In the text that follows, the arts are treated at length.

Grammar is depicted in the middle in the bottom zone, seated on the tiled floor. She wears a pink cloak over a blue tunic and her hair hangs loose. In her right hand she holds up a rod; with her left hand inside her cloak she is holding a child that is standing to her left in a green tunic with yellow hose, black shoes and his hand in his book; he is looking up to his mistress. Within the *tableau*, Grammar is the only art shown teaching. The others hold their usual attributes, except for Rhetoric who – surprisingly – is blowing a clarion, and Theology who is depicted with a globe topped with a cross. The angel on a cloud in the top-left corner must be Philosophy; her posture gives no definitive clue to this, but from the arts mentioned in the text she is the only one not otherwise identifiable in the picture.

A comparable scene can be found in an extended ‘group portrait’ which opens a very interesting landscape-shaped grammar book from the same period and region.⁵⁴ In this case, the names of the arts are provided (ill. 225). Comparable too is the position of Grammar, who is in the bottom zone in the middle again, enthroned and pointing to a character (the L) on an alphabet board she is holding. Interestingly, she is the only art seated before a low wall, and right behind her is a

ill. 226. *Battle of words and verbs, Grammaire et Figures, French, sixteenth century. Paris, National Library of France, ms fr 151, f 11r. © BNF.*

⁵⁴ Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, ms fr 151, f 1r (French, sixteenth century).

small gate that offers access through this wall into the garden behind in which all the other arts are arranged. Although without the company of other arts, Grammar is not alone in the lower zone. On the left side is a group of three boys wearing fancy collars and hats, one holding a catch racket, with a kolf club with ball and a lute left on the ground. They are being pushed away by a contemporary-dressed soldier with spear and sword. This side is labelled 'Lata via ignorantia' (The broad way of ignorance). To the right, three children are climbing rocks, assisted by a woman in classical armour, who left her spear and shield on the floor. This is the way to reach the gate, and behind the rocks there are flowers; the label reads 'Tendit ad ardua virtus' (Virtue leads to the hard way).

In the garden above, the arts are grouped around a fountain, no doubt a fountain of wisdom. Next to arts well-recognized by now like 'dialectique' under a tree with eyes, 'rhetorique' with books and Mercury's staff, 'geometrie' with compasses on a globe, 'musique' with sheet music and instruments and 'astrologie' with sphere and stars, we encounter 'fysique' (physics) by a fire and 'metaphysique' (metaphysics) speaking. 'Medicine' is represented by a doctor with a urine glass, 'theologie' by a nun praying to the word 'DEUS' (god) in a halo above her, and finally and originally 'iurisprudence' (jurisprudence) by a blindfolded woman with sword and scales, in the same way that Justice is usually depicted. It is made clear that Grammar is the entrance to knowledge and wisdom, and the specific form of the image is adapted to its function here, as a frontispiece to a grammar book.

But this was not just any grammar book. If ever a medieval book was complicated and playful at the same time, presenting complex matters in a way that would suit, even please children, it is this *Grammaire et figures* (figured grammar), where all words have been depicted as characters in page-sized battle scenes. Words, word groups and notions are figured as soldiers, groups of soldiers, commanders and even whole armies, fighting and marching through a landscape of grammar rules. All the words are in Latin, of course, but the captions are in French, naming the regiments like the 'Regiment des adverbes', 'Regiment des prepositions', 'Regiment des pronoms' and elements of the landscape like the 'kingdom of the participium', 'the land of conjunctions', 'the province of interjections' and 'the river or'. On page 11 there is a battle between the names and the verbs and their alliances (ill. 226), with ladies in the bottom zone taking sides and shouting 'oh!' and 'ah!'.

This may be the nicest, but is not the only figured grammar book: in 1509 a *Grammatica figurata* was published by Mathias Ringmann, which is an edition of the *Ars Minor* of Donatus provided with sets of illustrated cards to be used in the learning and testing of grammatical rules; apparently the pupils had sets of cards that they could play out when asked questions.⁵⁵ A Dutch grammar book printed in 1550, *Nederlandsche Spellinghe, uutghesteld bij vraghe ende andwoorde* [...] has page-sized figures as well, including appropriately a depiction of Grammar herself.⁵⁶

The group portrait of the arts would become a popular execution of the theme in Renaissance painting, allowing a more naturalistic setting for the ladies to be sitting and conversing together.⁵⁷ Often they still hold their attributes, but less suspiciously, or are depicted practising their art themselves: Music playing an organ, Geometry measuring, Astrology looking at a globe. In this context, Grammar can be teaching within the group portrait, as she did on the lost late-sixteenth-century painting by Frans Floris, that is known to us through engravings by Theodoor Galle and a copy based on those engravings by Hendrick van Montfoort.⁵⁸ The setting and framework are very Renaissance indeed.

55 Reprint: Von Wieser 1905, also accessible on the website: <http://mywebpages.comcast.net/pythian/cia/grammatica/figurata.html> (June 2007).

56 Ghent, University Library, consulted through the database of the Koninklijk Instituut voor het Kunstpatrimonium (KIK) in Brussels, also accessible on the website www.kikirpa.be, using their image number M115306.

57 For instance, the fresco made by Botticelli for the Villa Lemmi in Florence c.1483-1485, now in Paris, Musée du Louvre, RF 322 (but no child with Grammar here); this fresco is connected with the humanistic climate around Lorenzo il Magnifico at the time.

58 Brussels, Koninklijke Musea voor Schone Kunsten, inv.no. 6950, see: *Koninklijke Musea* 1984: 109.

A male Grammar

In all manuscripts discussed above, *Grammatica* took the form of a woman, but it can be depicted as a male teacher as well, as in a manuscript of the *L'Image du Monde* by Maître Gossouin, illuminated in the North of France before 1467, now in the Royal Library in Brussels (ill. 227).⁵⁹ Here, a miniature (6.5 x 7 cms) shows a teacher in a purple gown with a red headdress sitting in a chair, with his right hand in a speaking gesture and his left holding a whip against his shoulder. A rubric inscription identifies him: 'Cest gramaire' (This is Grammar). Somewhat lower to the left sit four boys, hair cut short and dressed in pink, red and blue tunics, two of them holding open books and all looking up to the teacher. On the next page, 10v, 'Logique' is accompanied by two young and four adolescent disciples and 'Rhetorique' is in the company of three adult listeners, while on page 11v the last art, 'Astronomie', is talking to a group of people as well. The other three numerical



ill. 227 Grammar as a teacher, *L'Image du Monde*, Northern-French, before 1467. Brussels, Royal Library, ms 9822, f 10r. © KBB Brussels.

59 Brussels, Koninklijke Bibliotheek van België, ms 9822.

arts in between, on pages 10v and 11r, are single men behind a counting table, a drawing table and chimes respectively. All seven arts are represented by men in this manuscript.

When represented by male personifications, it may be that the arts teaching are meant to be the classical authorities in the subject, that is, the (male) authors of the handbooks used for learning this art. Sometimes the female personifications of the arts were supported by these male authors, as we already encountered, for instance, on the cathedral of Chartres, the walls of the Spanish chapel in Florence and the Liberal Arts room in the Vatican Palace (see ill. 188, 212 & 215). They could also function as symbols of the arts without their ladies; it may well be that the portraits of these seven classical authors, that are among the paintings by Joos van Gent for the *studiolo* of Federico in Urbino, were meant as a series of liberal arts. The combinations of arts and authors form a fixed scheme, although some variation is possible, as more than one book was used for learning the art. A manuscript in London shows on consecutive left pages ink drawings of the seven arts, each personified by the authority, inscribed by his name and shown teaching the appropriate group of listeners; the scene is explained by a Latin inscription:

Page	Art	Authority	Inscription in BL, ms Add 15692
25v	Grammar	Priscian (or Donatus)	'Scholares p[ar]ticulares usita[n]tes gramatica'
26v	Logic	Aristotle	'Studentes arguentes in logica'
27v	Rhetoric	Cicero (Tullius)	'Retho[rica] ex[ul]tet hic dictando et scribendo'
28v	Arithmetic	Pythagoras	'Hic exerce[n]t arismetricam numerando'
29v	Geometry	Euclid	'Geometria exerce[n]t hic me[n]sinando et ponderando phrige[n]are'
30v	Astronomy	Ptolemy	'Astronomia hic per astronomotus et astrolabia exercite[n]t'
31v	Music	Amocrabes	'Et musica hic per citariza[n]torie ex[er]ce[n]t'

Fig. V. Arts, authorities and explanations in BL Add.ms. 15692.

As the book states, 'Grammar is used by schoolchildren ('scholares') in particular', and Priscian is depicted (ill. 228) speaking to three children sitting on benches and on the edge of his platform, one with a book and one with an alphabet board held up behind the head of another. The inscription with Logic reads that students ('studentes') discuss it, so appropriately Aristotle is depicted reading to four young men sitting on benches to his right. Cicero is accompanied by adult men of high rank (indicated by their clothes and a lap dog) who dictate from official documents provided with seals and write on scrolls. Pythagoras is counting money together with a young boy – dressed like the 'scholares' on page 25v – and a boy like that is also looking at Ptolemy's globes on page 30v, but the persons with Euclid (Geometry) and Amocrabes (Music) are adults, dressed like the students or the men of high rank as seen with Aristotle and Cicero.

In this manuscript, the 'septem artes liberales' (as written on f 23r and 23v) are succeeded by the 'septem artes cherhamitis' (f 33r), the ceramic arts, called 'artes mechanices' or mechanical arts elsewhere. Depictions of these 'unfree' arts (as in: of the hands, not of the mind) occur much less frequently, which causes their canon being less fixed than that of the free or liberal arts. The 'artes mechanices' usually deal with working the land (agriculture, sometimes botany, gardening or tending grapes specifically), war and transport (sailing, sometimes wagons), and



ill. 228. *Priscian as Grammar*, fifteenth century. London, British Library, ms Add. 15692, f 25v. © British Library.

working material (blacksmith, goldsmith, but sometimes mining as well). Hence, the choice made here is fairly representative:

Page	Art in Latin	Meaning	Depicted as
34v	Laniferium	Woolworking	Loom, spinning, carding
35v	Venatura	Hunting	Hunter with horn, dogs, deer and hare
36v	Milicia sive Armatura	Warfare	Sword fight, jousting tournament
37v	Nautario sive Navigatio	Seafare	Men in boats
38v	Agricultura	Agriculture	Plough with share and harrow
39v	Medicina	Medicine	Cutting in wound, woman with herbs
40v	Ars fabrilis	Forging	Smithy

Fig. VI. *Mechanical arts in BL Add ms 15692.*

Grammar's alphabet

In the images of Grammar presented so far, most of the time the pupil was holding a book, from which he was reading, while in the Carafa chapel in Rome, he holds an alphabet board. In manuscript illumination, alphabet tablets or 'hornbooks' were depicted more often and in more detail. The child with Grammar in the *Homage on Robert of Anjou* by Convevole da Prato now in Vienna⁶⁰ (ill. 229) is shown with an alphabet tablet dangling from his arm by a noose through the hole in the handle. It shows the characters 'abc def ghi'. Grammar is a severe mistress here, with a whip ready. That she is feeding the child from her breast seems to be contradictory, but is taken directly from Martianus Capella, where Grammar is described quenching

⁶⁰ Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. ser. n. 2639, f 34v (Italian, 1334-1343).



E hic edid Augustinus
liber vni. dicit aduocatus et
liber vni dicit rex. annu
prium et liber dicit in epi
da que de dicitur de oratio
communi. **S**icut est credere q non uides
mans est inuicem sacramento offitue
dote in vni domi quia ipa est iama
p quatuor uer ad deum intelligendu et a
munda ipa et omni bono fundam
tum et humane salutis munus. **D**er
pua uirtutu fides et sciencia uirtus
et uirtus que xpo fundatus pulchre
uita. **H**ic ponit sciens serpes dupli
ca signat. **Q**ua fructus celant uelata
celia signat. **I**y sunt atrieli quibus
abstinencia credit. **I**upugnans atri
uirtu dicit pter

De hac sacra fecit Aug
ustinus liber i. et hic dicitur
liber soliloquior quatuor
Gratiarum est uocis
amici audas meditare
discipline atri uocellente pfectionis ruy
humane lingue omnia conera figurata col
lige que memorie lris mandata sunt non
ca falsa faciens sed de his uerum quedam
docens et afferens rationem. **T**am in
arces pater gratiarum pua. **Q**ua cum laet
pua thillat lin labys. **Q**ua pua de uice
uis filius ferreis mucus atri. **D**am pua
ocens puellans signat ymago. **D** pua
conuer sapientia eni gla uocat. **E**t in pua
trianus atri uoluntate fchide.

the thirst for knowledge, feeding words like milk; it is depicted more often,⁶¹ and in some of those cases she is holding a rod too.⁶² The man at her feet is Priscian, the accompanying authority teaching from his grammar book; also the other arts appear with their authorities.

The label above Grammar's head lists the four main subjects of grammar: 'ditographia, ethymologia, dyasemastica, prosodia'. These four subdivisions of Grammar are explained in a manuscript of c.1355 with the *Cantica* of Bartolomea de Bartoli, now in the castle of Chantilly (France):⁶³

'Ortographia' – 'sive sci[enti]a recte scribendi' (or the art of writing correctly)

'Ethymologia' – 'sive sci[enti]a denuntiandi' (or the art of explaining)

'Dyasemastica' – 'sive sci[enti]a recte costruendi' (or the art of constructing)

'Prosodia' – 'sive sci[enti]a recte pronuntiandi' (or the art of pronouncing).

Writing is seen as the base here.

These lines are in an image of Grammar very similar to that in Vienna, showing a mirror image of an enthroned Grammar with a rod, feeding a pupil who has an alphabet board, and supported by Priscian. The child holds its arms crossed; from its right elbow the alphabet tablet is hanging, the right bottom corner disappearing behind Grammar's dress. The tablet, measuring only 1.5 x 1 cms in the original, is painted in great detail. In the short side, carried horizontally, there are two holes for holding the tablet that are split from the short side. The sling from which the board is carried is fastened in the middle in between these holes. On the white board, most of the alphabet characters in brown can be read.

Usually, the board with characters carried by Grammar's pupil is a board for reading, serving like the alphabet in books in other depictions (like in Foligno). However, grammar is also the teacher of handwriting – according to the poem – and the board does resemble a writing tablet, as can be seen in this manuscript with Arithmetic, on f VIIIv, who is actually writing with a quill onto a tablet very similar to that on f VIIr, with the same two holes. It is somewhat longer (2 x 1 cms in the original), but apart from the rim indicated on all sides it is similar, with numbers in brown (ink) on white. From this, we must understand the alphabet board carried by Grammar's pupil as containing an alphabet written in ink onto a sheet, that is in some way fastened to the tablet: it is not a writing tablet, but a reading tablet, a predecessor of the hornbook. Both tablets are shown a second time, in the tree diagram with the arts on folio Xv, succeeding the individual representations of the liberal arts. Grammar is not feeding the pupil here, but pointing to the characters on the board (with holes) the child is holding with both hands. Only the characters 'abcd efgh ik' can be read, but it does only measure 4 x 6 mms in original. The equally small board (with holes) Arithmetic is holding has no rim and no figures here.

It is unclear why the alphabet board is so detailed precisely in these depictions of Grammar as both a teacher and an 'alma lactans'. It may just be a matter of style – in other iconographic contexts individual ABC-tablets can be surprisingly detailed too – but it may also relate to the hybrid nature of the image, where a child being breast-fed had to be characterized as a pupil at the same time. It must be said that this image, where the breast-feeding is marginalized and the school equipment (tablet and whip) emphasized, is much more recognizable as Grammar than some of the other images, where a woman with children at her breasts can only be identified because of the inscription 'grammatica'.

LEFT PAGE:

ill.229. *Grammar with pupil holding alphabet tablet, Italian, 1334-1343. Vienna, National Library of Austria, Cod.ser.n.2639, f 34v. © ÖNB.*

61 For instance, on the pulpit by the Pisano brothers in the cathedral of Pisa, see: D'Ancona 1902: 211-212; also Tezmen-Siegel 1985: Abb. 18 (Heidelberg, University Library, Cod. pal.germ.14, f 5v).

62 Other examples: Tezmen-Siegel 1985: 105 (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, ms.lat. 8500, f 30v); 132 and Abb. 16 (Leiden, University Library, Cod.Voss. G.G.F4, f 193v; 133 and Abb. 17 (Darmstadt, Hessische Landesbibliothek, Cod. 2779, f 223v).

63 Chantilly, Musée Condé, ms 599 (sometimes referred to by its old signature: ms lat+ital 1426).

Arts of Europe

A book of hours for Paris use, most likely owned by a French family and illuminated by an Italian artist at the turn of the fifteenth century,⁶⁴ has depictions of the liberal arts in the calendar, as well as other personifications. The course of the year has been tied to many other circular themes here: not only the zodiac signs and labours of the months, but also the creation story, the virtues, the planet gods and the muses. The scheme is quite complex:

Pages	Calendar	Zodiac sign	Creation scene or Art	Labour month	Virtue or Art	Planet
1r	January I	Aquarius	Creation earth	Meal		
1v	January II		Land from sea		Faith	Saturn
2r	February I	Pisces	Light from dark	Warming		
2v	February II		Sun/moon/stars		Hope	Jupiter
3r	March I	Aries	Animals	Pruning		
3v	March II		Man at throne God		Justice	Mars
4r	April I	Taurus	Creation Adam	Picking flowers		
4v	April II		Adam crowned		Charity	Venus
5r	May I	Gemini	Creation Eve	Courting		
5v	May II		Adam/Eve in paradise		Devil?	Mercury
6r	June I	Cancer	Snake speaking	Cutting grass		
6v	June II		God/Adam at tree		Strength	Moon
7r	July I	Leo	God/Eve at tree	Reaping		
7v	July II		Christ and Satan		Prudence	Sun
8r	August I	Virgo	Expulsion from paradise	Threshing		
8v	August II		Adam and Eve working		Temperance	Mercury
9r	September I	Libra	Grammar	Vintage		
9v	September II		Logic		Rhetoric	Venus
10r	October I	Scorpio	Geometry	Sowing		
10v	October II		Arithmetic		Music	Mars
11r	November I	Sagittarius	Poetry	Acorn seeking		
11v	November II		Philosophy		Astrology	Jupiter
12r	December I	Capricorn	Theology	Butchering		
12v	December II		Misery		Fame	Saturn

Fig. VII. *Cyclical themes and personifications in BL Add.ms. 11866; the arts in bold print.*

The fixed combinations of zodiac signs and planet gods was explained in the chapter on the Children of Mercury (see § 5.2). Tied to the well-known scheme of the months and their agricultural works, these elements of the calendar are quite common. The inclusion of the ages of the world according to the book of Genesis is unusual, but does sometimes occur. What is original here is the addition of personifications of virtues, arts and ‘misery’ (Misery) and ‘fame’ (Fame) to the scheme. There was no scheme for this, and it seems that it was invented for this manuscript. In this case, the seven liberal arts are in the company of Philosophy and Theology (as often occurs) and Poetry, to make a total of ten personified arts. They have been divided over the pages devoted to the months of September through December (ill. 230). Grammar is not accompanied by a pupil here, but she is holding a rod in her hand as her typical attribute. This manuscript shows that the programmes of manuscripts were not inferior to those of monumental sculpture and painting in either complexity or quality.

64 London, British Library, Add.ms. 11866, calendar on folios 1r-12v.



ill. 230. *Logic, Rhetoric and Venus.* London, British Library, Add.ms. 11866, f9v. © British Library.

ill. 231. *Grammar holding paddle, painted on the ceiling of Peterborough cathedral, thirteenth century (recently restored).* Photo taken from: Binski 2006: 107.



Although French and Italian depictions are most abundant – and best preserved – the theme of the seven liberal arts and Grammar as a teacher is not restricted to those countries. One of the most ‘remote’ and at the same time earliest depictions was painted in the early thirteenth century onto the extraordinary wooden ceiling of the cathedral of Peterborough in England, where a large Lady Grammar holding a paddle (see § 2.6) is pointing in the book read by a pupil seated beside her (ill. 231). The other liberal arts are part of the ceiling as well.⁶⁵ This image shows that the basic iconography managed to travel this far early on, although the inclusion of a paddle instead of a rod is very uncommon in England.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Binski 2006: 100–108.

⁶⁶ But also in London, British Library, ms Burney 275 (English, fifteenth century) on f 94r, used for beating a pupil in a cloister school scene.

A Spanish manuscript, now in Paris, has a page-size depiction of a female Grammar holding a whip and a banderole inscribed ‘VOX LITERATA ET ARTICVLATA [MOD] DEBITO PRONVNSIATA’ (A word written, articulated, and pronounced correctly), while the text starts with ‘Habla d[e]la gramatica’ (Speaking about grammar).⁶⁷ A page-size depiction has been devoted to each of the other six liberal arts as well, basically with their usual attributes: scorpion, book, counting board, compass/plummet, musical instruments, and sphere. Astrology is pictured before the throne of Philosophy, and a succeeding image is devoted to a scholar led by ‘Razon’ (reason) and ‘Verdad’ (truth) to the ‘Casa dela Sabienza’ (House of Wisdom). The flowers held by dialectics and the guitar held by music might be seen as regional elements, but as a whole this imagery indicates that in Spanish manuscripts Grammar and the arts were illustrated in agreement with a more general Southern European tradition.

In her thorough survey of the theme, Tezmen⁶⁸ mentions some fifteenth-century German manuscripts with depictions of the liberal arts, that seem to cover the whole range of imagery as dealt with in this chapter, from a Grammar suckling children in a 1407 *Der Meide Kranz* of Heinrich van Mügeln, through a teaching Priscian in the 1425 *Alemannisches Hausbuch im mittelhochdeutscher Sprache*, to a beautiful and tender Lady Grammar with a rod and her arms around a child standing at her side reading (ill. 232) in a 1472 Bavarian copy of Hugo von Trimberg’s *Der Renner*.⁶⁹ Some painted, some ink drawn, these German images – mostly from the extreme south of the country – certainly connect with what was made on the other side of the Alps.

6.9 A realistic Grammar?

The liberal arts had originally been a theoretical classification of knowledge, derived from classical authors and used as a base on which to construct a concept of education. But it was taken much further in the Later Middle Ages, where it formed the actual framework of the school system, used for the divisions into classes and levels and the shaping of the curriculum. The depictions of the liberal arts, originally designed as a visual counterpart of written descriptions, became an individual theme, which was obviously considered suitable in the decoration programmes of both prestigious buildings and private homes, both liturgical objects and dinner service, both prayer books and school texts. That the theme functioned well in both an ecclesiastical and a secular context must be one of the reasons for its popularity. As these images represent knowledge in the shape of something that could – and should – be learned, the frequent use of them indicates that education was considered important and valued highly and openly on a public and a private level, from the twelfth well into the seventeenth century, and across the whole of Western Europe at least. Depictions of Grammar teaching and of the other liberal arts were used to decorate the exterior or interior of schools in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (see § 7.1). In a way, the arts had come full circle then, given a role as visual translations of an educational system that had been derived from them.

Within this programme of the arts, Grammar is the one depicted most clearly as a teacher, almost always accompanied by pupils and provided with the rod or paddle, the teacher’s pre-eminent insignia. There is often more than one child in the picture, and often the available space has been used cleverly to include as many

67 Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, ms Espagnol 39, f 3r.

68 Tezmen-Siegel 1985.

69 Respectively: Heidelberg, University Library, Cod.pal.germ. 14, f 5v; Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, Hs. St. Georgen 81, f 42v; Darmstadt, Hessische Landesbibliothek, Cod. 2779, f 223v; see: Tezmen-Siegel 1985: 132-133, Abb. 16-24 (including a suckling Grammar with rod in a 1402 copy of *Der Renner*: Leiden, University Library, Cod.Voss. G.G.F. 4, f 193v) and 232, Abb. 40-47.



ill. 232. *Grammar with a pupil.*
 Darmstadt, Hessische
 Landesbibliothek, Cod.
 2779, f 223v.
 © HLB Darmstadt.

small people as possible. In this way, it is indicated that Grammar teaches a group of children and is not giving private instruction, although the depiction is seldom transformed into a real school. Grammar as a subject was considered the basis, a door to the other arts, and was also in reality the first thing to learn, which is why she is the one most often shown instructing. Grammar was usually taught in larger groups, so that must have seemed a logical choice.

ill. 233. *Woman teaching a child to read, piatto di pompa, Deruta, 1500-1530. Sèvres, National Museum of Ceramics, inv. no. MNC 2470/4. © Author.*



Images of grammar teaching, when considered out of context, have often been misunderstood and misused as ‘photographs’ of female teachers. Of course, Grammar is personified by a woman because her name in Latin is a feminine word: *Grammatica*. But there was an alternative, personifying grammar by its male authority, and that did not become very popular on its own. It shows that it was at least imaginable and acceptable for the medieval and Renaissance audience that women teach both boys and girls, as her pupils can be of both sexes. But it may have been more familiar. Grammar is often depicted as a ‘gentle mistress’, assisting her pupils in their first efforts to learn to read or write, like the old lady in the Darmstadt manuscript lovingly guiding her pupil’s hand (see ill. 232). This combines well with the fact that the basic instruction of children, both boys and girls, in reading and writing, was indeed often done by women.

Moreover, the image of a woman teaching a child to read had many connotations, and turned into a sort of icon; sometimes it is hard to distinguish the image of Lady Grammar teaching a pupil from that of Mary teaching Jesus and indeed of any woman or mother instructing a child in reading. In manuscripts, the precise meaning is usually clear from the context, or from inscriptions provided, but in other art forms the image can be puzzling. A beautiful majolica plate or *piatto di pompa* made in Deruta in the first third of the sixteenth century⁷⁰ (ill. 233) presents such a ‘general’ image: a seated woman lovingly holds a boy in tunic between her knees, reading with him from a book. The décor imitates an engraving by Marco Dente after work by Raphael. On the plate, neither the woman nor child have a halo, but nevertheless the motive is explained as a ‘Vierge et enfant’ on the museum label and in the literature. The banderole speaks in favour of a ‘common’ explanation:

⁷⁰ Sèvres, Musée National de Céramique, inv.no. MNC 2470/4.



ill. 234. *Boy reading*, Vincenzo Foppa, c.1464. London, The Wallace Collection, inv.no. P 538. Photo taken from postcard.

‘PER DORMIRE NO SE AQUISTA’ (You do not learn by sleeping) is a moral saying that does not seem to relate to the Virgin and Child.

The same type of misunderstanding determines the history of an inspiring fifteenth-century fresco fragment showing a boy on a bench reading (ill. 234) at an open window, where an inkwell is standing; on a shelf and in a closet are six books. The painting was taken from the Banco Mediceo in Milan and is attributed to Vincenzo Foppa.⁷¹ The inscription ‘M.T. CICERO’ has inspired scholars to see Cicero as a boy here, but it is more logical to interpret the boy as a personification of rather an illustration with Rhetoric, as Cicero is the authority of *Rhetorica*: likely this fragment is all that is left of a whole series of the liberal arts. We can only fantasize what equally inspiring depiction of Grammar could have matched it.

⁷¹ London, The Wallace Collection, inv. no. P 538, see: Alexander 1994: 16.



Elv seintome enpmees est dit ou du lieu
ou il repose. ou des greses par lesquelles Il
souffrir mort. Car pmees est adire grese.
Et dient aucuns que quant il estoit
maistre des enfans il leur estoit trop rigoureux. si fu pris
des priens. Et pour ce quil confessoit franchement q'iesu crist
estre vray dieu il fu baillie es mains des enfans q' il auoit
enseignes. lesquels locurent de leurs conteaulx de leurs
broches et greses. Et toutesfoies leglise tient quil ne fu
pas martir mais confesseur. Desquels enfans lui disoient

DAILY LIFE AT SCHOOL

School objects

It may seem cruel, but the best way to determine what items can be considered as typical school objects of the Late Middle Ages is to look at the scene of a person being killed by them (ill. 235). A miniature depicting the martyrdom of St. Felix in a Flemish manuscript from the mid-fifteenth century¹ shows five boys torturing their teacher Felix to death, using their school tools as weapons. From the setting, it is clear that the room depicted is meant to be a classroom, and the implements used are school things (see § 2.5).

There are quite a few items in this depiction. The five killers are using a wooden club, a reed basket, a bag and a writing case (consisting of a pen case and an inkwell from a double strap), a penknife and a writing tablet with a handle to hit their teacher. More of the same objects are in the room: two books are lying on the rack on the left wall, while another writing tablet, another book bag and another writing case are hanging from it. A third book is on the bench in the background, while a second book bag and a second basket are hanging from hooks in the right hand wall. A fourth, opened book is on the floor in the foreground, possibly placed on a third book bag, with a writing peg next to it. Finally, on the small bench in the left corner, a written page of parchment on top of a last book can be seen, flanked by a second penknife and an inkwell with a quill in it. Two of the schoolboys are wearing double writing cases hanging from their belts.

Because it is certain from the context that here a classroom is represented, we may want to take a look at how it has been drawn. It is a small, rectangular room, with an undetermined floor and brick walls, showing three traced windows in the three walls that can be seen. There is a fixed, low, wooden bench along the back wall, while a small wooden bench has been placed separately in the room. In the left wall, an arched doorway permits a view into a cloister. The schooling seems to have taken place in an annex to a church or cloister; one could walk into it from the corridor.

7.1 School buildings

Architecture

In the Netherlands, a handful of school buildings from the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern era are still standing. In Nijmegen, a large building on the market square just behind the weigh-house is the Latin School, built there in 1544 under supervision of the architect Herman van Heregraven. A school was on this spot from at least 1397, when it is mentioned for the first time, but probably already from

LEFT PAGE:

ill. 235. *St. Felix killed with school equipment, Legenda Aurea, Flemish, c.1445-1460. New York, The Morgan Library, M.672, f 87r. © Morgan Library.*

¹ New York, The Morgan Library, ms M.672, fol. 87r; zie: *Leven te Leuven* 1998: 367.



ill. 236. *Grammar school building in Groningen, sixteenth century.*
© Author.

ill. 237. *Grammar school attached to the Church of St. Gertrude in Workum, sixteenth century.*
© Author.

the thirteenth century onwards. It was linked to the main Church of St. Stephen, but maintained by the city council, that appointed and paid the masters as well. In Workum, the small sixteenth-century two-storied school building is physically attached to the Church of St. Gertrude (ill. 237), but this was a city grammar school as well. A bit bigger is the school near the Church of St. Martin in Groningen, built around 1550 (ill. 236). The Nijmegen and Groningen buildings are elongated, 29 x 7 m and 40 x 12.30 m respectively. Both have two floors and a saddleback roof. The Groningen school has a tower, where Nijmegen has just a small belfry; both must have held bells to summon the pupils to class. The global similarities between these two buildings invited Elizabeth den Hartog to see the elongated, two-storied building as a prototype of the bigger Latin schools in Dutch cities.² But the still-standing Latin School of Leiden, built in 1600 on the site of earlier schools (see § 3.2), is a different type of building, high and narrow, not elongated, and with the step gable typical for Holland. In general, the available building space must have played a part in what kind of building was chosen for the school. A 'school' then is not really a building type, but more any building that could house and manage a certain number of pupils. The two stories are a basic division and may have played a role in keeping apart the younger and the older pupils or the boys from the girls.

As all preserved school buildings have been renovated many times since the sixteenth century, not much of their original interiors is known, but their dimensions indicate that they were divided into a number of rooms for different classes. This is backed up by the number of pupils and teachers mentioned for the Nijmegen school of the second half of the sixteenth century in the written sources:

² Den Hartog 1997: 242-243.

‘a thousand’ students, taught by seven masters and two choir masters. Moreover, the main reasons for the construction of new, purpose-built schools in the sixteenth century were the growing populations and the desire for interior division; in Leiden, the new school lay-out was called an improvement because the pupils and teachers moved from one or two spaces to six rooms housing six different classes.

A European perspective

In other countries of Europe, more school buildings from the later Middle Ages have been preserved, usually because they kept their function as a school for centuries after. This is notably the case in England, where many of the more prestigious colleges go back to the Middle Ages. The oldest purpose-built school still standing is Winchester College from the late fourteenth century, while Eton College from 1440 is still more or less in its original shape as well. The outward appearance of both is quite different from the sixteenth-century Latin Schools of the Netherlands, but these colleges are not only schools but complete housing complexes for boarding pupils. Not by chance, the plan of such a college resembles that of a monastery.

More like the Dutch schools are the separate smaller school buildings for city children such as that of 1426-1427 in Stratford-upon-Avon, which is part of a larger, timber-framed complex with a church, an old men’s home and guild quarters alongside Church Street – William Shakespeare was one of the pupils of this grammar school. Lessons were given on the second floor of the building that was also used by the guilds for meetings. It must be considered for every country that purpose-built – and thus recognizable – schools were relatively late and that most buildings that housed schools were not exclusively seen as such: as everything necessary for lessons can be transferred to any room big enough, it is hard to identify a school building in the first place.

Medieval English schools received a lot of attention in 2004, when a fierce BBC-competition between 20,000 sites for a large restoration fund was eventually, after 750,000 public votes cast, won by the Old Grammar School of Kings Norton near Birmingham. The school was purpose-built between 1434 and 1460 and declared ‘at risk’ by English Heritage because of serious decay of the timber-framed structure. After the restoration, it will be reopened as an educational site focusing on the history of education. The pleas for the winning building made known to a large audience that there were intact medieval schools in England.

The oldest school still standing in Scandinavia is the Latin School (Latinskolan) next to St. Mary’s Church in Ystad in the southernmost tip of Sweden, not far from Copenhagen – this part of Sweden belonged to the kingdom of Denmark in the Middle Ages. The school is a brick building from around 1500, rather small (12.8 x 7 m, much alike the Workum school), with two stories and high-raised gables (see ill. 9). Restoration work revealed an older building at the spot, that may well have been a school too. The Latin school building is known from written sources since the 1530s, and was actually in use as a school until as late as 1841. It is now freestanding and quite remarkable, but was still in between houses at the end of the nineteenth century.³

Locations

The existing buildings of the grammar schools of Groningen, Leiden, Nijmegen, and Workum, the first two also sites of school excavations, are all located next to the main church or in its immediate vicinity. This was the fixed spot for the city

3 For the information and photographs of the Ystad school, I am thankful to Stefan Larsson of the Archaeology Service in Lund, who arranged both at short notice. The nineteenth-century situation can be seen in a 1892 photograph by S.M. Marcus at www.ystad.se/Ystadweb.nsf (June 2007).

ill. 238. *Painting depicting Grammar, 1400-1425. Front of former Grammar school in Memmingen, Germany. © Author.*



school, even if it no longer fell under the responsibility of the chapter or parish. Many of the schools whose buildings were destroyed are known from written sources to have been next to the church as well. When new school buildings were constructed, as happened in most cities in the second half of the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth century, many replaced older buildings, and others were situated on empty plots of land in the heart of the city, which meant that they were close to the church as well.

The idea that ‘the school’ was next to ‘the church’ was widespread also outside the Low Countries, and can be traced in the depictions of ‘a school’ when represented in illustrations from all over Europe. When the door of the school is indicated, as is the case in scenes where someone is taken to school or going to school, many times the porch, tower or interior of a church is indicated in the direct vicinity as well (see ill. 138). The 1523 school order of Zwickau advertises the school’s situation in a modest, yet secluded, beautiful and very quiet spot (‘wie billich, gar an eynem heymlichen, lustigen, sehr stillen ortt’).⁴

Exterior

Even the outside appearance of the school buildings still standing changed a lot over time, but in most cases some traces are left of the original inscription or memorial tablet placed when the building was inaugurated. Usually, this consists of a Latin inscription above the entrance, mentioning its function and the date, like the inscription above the door of the Leiden Grammar School: ‘Pietati[s], linguis, et artib[us] liberal[i]s, S.P.Q. Lugdunensis restau[rit] An[no] MDC’ (Piety, languages, and liberal arts, the city of Leiden has restored this, A.D. 1600’.

Sometimes, foundation inscriptions have been noted down by antiquarians in earlier centuries, so they can be read even if the whole building was destroyed. Around 1700, the inscription on one of the beams of the city grammar school of Göttingen, located next to the Johanniskirche (Church of St. John) and the verger’s house, was copied: ‘Omnium et Graiorum et Peripateticorum Sapiemtissimi Aristotelis Domus, abs Magnificis Consulibus, Edilibus Curulibus edificatis, in

⁴ Wirth 1983: 269.

ea ut nostra Theopolitana Juventus adornetur non tantum ingenius bene vivendi moribus, sed eciam dicendi laudatissimis Artibus. 1494'.⁵

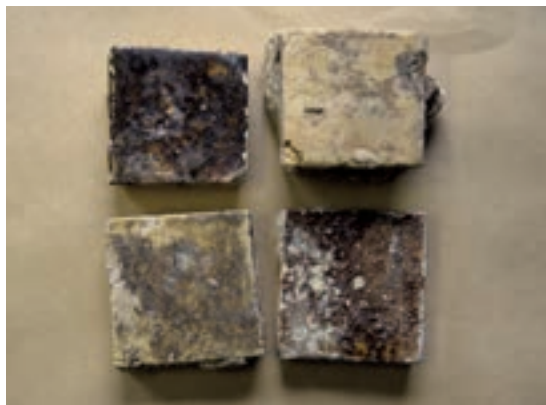
Apart from these permanent signs, there may well have been signboards or decorations on the walls that stressed the function of the building, but only in exceptional cases have those been preserved. On the façade of the former grammar school ('Reichsstädtische Lateinschule') of Memmingen in southern Germany – Haus Weber am Bach, now a restaurant and beer cellar – part of the original painted outside decoration was found back in 1947 when the building was restored; it was photographed and covered again. In 1975, it was revealed again, restored heavily and left visible (ill. 238). The fresco painting of about 60 x 100 cms showed a personification of *Grammatica* (for the theme, see Chapter 6) seated behind a lectern, pointing in an open book, reading and speaking. At her feet were at least three pupils; the curly hair of one can still be seen. On stylistic grounds, the painting can be dated to the first half of the fifteenth century.⁶ This subject was of course ideally suited for the embellishment of a grammar school. As far as I know, this is the only wall painting left on a school, but there must have been more.

Floor and roof

As no medieval class interior has been preserved 'frozen in time', and reconstructed classrooms in museums are often based on later examples, we need to look at other sources for an impression of a classroom. For this, there are first the scarce building fragments found during excavations. Secondly, there is the 'greatest common denominator' of all the interior details seen in the depictions of school scenes. Finally, some references to the interior of classrooms are made in texts.

During excavations in the thirteenth/fourteenth-century school of Liège, a lot of small yellow- and brown-glazed tiles were found (ill. 239). They were not *in situ* anymore, but would have been placed originally in some alternating pattern. This is seen in depictions of schools in manuscripts too: under the feet of the pupils there is always a pattern of flagstones, many times chequered in a light and a dark colour, with yellow and brown as the most common shades (see ill. 108). Of course, chequered tiled floors are not exclusive to schools, but the rooms in which lessons took place all seem to have had a floor like that.

Some of the existing school buildings still preserve the original truss. It is nothing special in a medieval context: large oak beams supporting the roof, with crossbeams supporting the floors. Still, beams like these are visible in almost all



ill. 239. Floor tiles excavated in the school of Liège, before 1370. Liège, Archaeological Service of Wallony, inv.no. L 7512. © Author.

⁵ Wirth 1983: 259.

⁶ Wirth 1983: 256-257.

depictions of schools in manuscripts. Both a system of vertical and diagonal roof beams and a row of flat beams supporting a ceiling occur, indicating that sometimes a school was pictured in a one-story building, or on the top floor, while sometimes it was placed in a space above which another floor was indicated. This is in line with school buildings still standing, that always have more than one level.

Lighting and heating

The existing literature on medieval schools echoes a general idea that it was freezing in classrooms. This is belied by the presence of glazed windows and stoves. Window glass was found in the fourteenth-century school of Liège, in Zwolle and Gorinchem. That windows were glazed is also the impression one gets from depictions, where without exception a view outside is permitted through some windows in the room, with greenish panes and brown wooden bars and shutters (see ill. 106). This is an important feature for keeping the heat inside.

Texts do refer to money spent by parents, benefactors and councils on the fitting of classrooms. They paid for both fire wood for open fires or stoves and saw or hay to be put on the floors; this can also be seen in depictions, for instance in the Hours of Catherine of Cleves (see ill. 15). This seems to be common: the costs for a boy at Ewelme poor boys' school in 1464-1465 included money for ink, candles, straw on the floor of the schoolroom, and wood for the schoolroom fire.⁷ The list of necessities to be provided to Bruges schoolboys includes wood and straw.⁸ The governors at the Bruges Bogardenschool had to ensure that the children 'in de schole goedt vier hebben upstaende, ende als zy te bedden ghaen dat se warme voeten hebben' (have a good fire burning in the school and that they have warm feet when they go to bed).⁹

Stoves in classrooms can also be seen in depictions of schools, especially in German prints, where many times typical sixteenth-century tiled stoves are visible (see cover ill.). It is possible that these stoves had tiles with appropriate figures: many German stove tiles show series of liberal arts, planets or the other intellectual grammes we encountered in an educational context before.¹⁰



ill. 240. Teacher's chair, oak, end sixteenth century. Brussels, Antiques Shop Huis Costermans (in 1986). Photo taken from: D'Haenens 1986: 239.

Furniture

In depictions of lessons, pupils usually sit on benches or on small, displaceable stools. Stools of this type have been preserved, but not from school contexts. Benches too have not been preserved *in situ*, but have been depicted in school scenes from Germany, England and Italy.¹¹ In the Netherlands there were benches too: they can be seen in depictions, for instance on sixteenth-century prints (see ill. 117) and were mentioned in written sources. In c.1430 the city school of Middelburg was equipped with 'sittene, boirden ende ander ghereetscapp, dair die scoelkinderen hoire spise ende hoire boucken op legghen mochte' (benches for sitting, boards and other tools, where the schoolchildren can put their food and their books).¹² The 1523 *Schulordnung* of Zwickau praises both the architecture and the divisions of the new building: the 'aufs ordentlichst wol erbawt[e] Collegium' (well-built college) has 'vier scho[e]ne lectoria mit ordentlichem gestu[e]l' (four nice classrooms with orderly seating).¹³

In the classroom specific provisions were made for teachers. They had their own type of chair, a wide wooden seat with a high back and sometimes a canopy, and with a compartment in the seat for books. A chair of this type, called *cathedra*, is depicted regularly in the manuscripts and woodwork of all Western European

⁷ Orme 2006: 134.

⁸ Schouteet 1960: 45 ('leeftocht, als van buetere, vaes, broot, cleederen, wullen ende lynen, hout ende turven').

⁹ Schouteet 1960: 117.

¹⁰ Unger 1988: 122-128.

¹¹ For Germany, see: ill. 115, and Reicke 1971: 53-55; for England see: Orme 2006: 117; for Italy see: ill. 111.

¹² Fortgens 1956: 50.

¹³ Wirth 1983: 268-269.

countries. A chair from the end of the sixteenth century has been preserved in Belgium (ill. 240); its back rises to 180 cms, while the seat is 64 x 47 cms.¹⁴ Attached to or placed with the chair would be a lectern, on which books and papers were placed (see ill. 105 & 109). But the most important feature is that the chair of the master was raised, by placing it on some sort of platform. This was a practical thing, as it enabled the master to look out over his class, but it was of course symbolic as well, putting the master on a higher level, where he should be approached with some respect. Danièle Alexandre-Bidon went so far as to call the chair 'the insignia of the master's dignity'.¹⁵

Wall decoration

Interior walls could be decorated as well, and appropriate themes might be chosen for this. In a letter from 1521, Erasmus of Rotterdam praises the paintings in the new building of St. Paul's school in London completed around 1510. They were paid for by a private person called Coletus, who had inherited the money from his father, and their iconography was devoted to the Christ child. The fact that young Jesus was depicted above the teacher's chair sitting and studying – a hint to his discovery in the temple among the scholars – was seen as particularly unique. With the Jesus child 'ipsum audite' (listen to me) could be read. Erasmus mentions this painting twice in printed works as well; the depiction of the Christ child learning within the school room was evidently seen as both exceptional and exemplary.¹⁶ The 1523 description of a school in Zwickau (Germany) mentioned above mentions at least the four mathematical arts as part of the decoration of the room:

'[...] zur unterweysing am dienstlichsten wolgetzirt [...] nach eyner eyden Rodt geschicklichkeyt [...] Historien, Carmina,

(well decorated to support teaching [...] with a wheel of fortune [...] histories, verses, proverbs, and the four disciplines



ill. 241. *Interior of a school, with various charts on the wall, dated 1592, German woodcut. Photo taken from: Reicke 1971: 56.*

14 D'Haenens 1986: 239 (cat.no. 371); it was at the time of the exposition in 1986 in the antiques shop of Huis Costermans in Brussels.

15 *École au Moyen Age* 2007: 11.

16 Wirth 1983: 265.

Proverbia, auch die vier disciplin Musica, Geometria, Arithmetick, und Astronomei, sambt dem universal der gantzen Welt'.¹⁷

Music, Geometry, Arithmetic, and Astronomy, together the whole of the universe).

Charts can be seen in some German printed depictions of the late sixteenth century, hanging on the walls of classrooms. They show characters, figures (ill. 241) or music.¹⁸ Some of these have trapezoid handles and can clearly be taken from the hooks they hang on, to be used by the teacher. There are also many schemes in manuscripts and printed schoolbooks, meant for being 'translated' into charts, and texts mention meters-long schemes for didactic purposes. The sixteenth-century printed images also testify most clearly to the walls of the classroom being used for putting up shelves and hooks for the storage of all kinds of equipment when not in use, from bags and paddles to foldable stools (see ill. 117).

Boarding facilities and hygiene

The arrangements of buildings within the complex of a boarding schools depended, of course, on the space available, but in many sources the school is cited as a building apart from the place where the boys ate, commonly called refectories, and slept, usually referred to as dormitories. The Bruges school order of 1555 stresses that pupils should do their schoolwork in the school and not in their rooms. It also mentions some side buildings like a kitchen, laundry house, baking house, office, grain storage, and private rooms for the masters.¹⁹ Also the advanced pupils slept together: their room is called the 'Latynsche kindercamere' (room of the Latin children).²⁰

The usual sleeping arrangement were dormitories, where each child had its own bed – they are punished heavily if they sleep together or go to another's bed.²¹ Usually these beds were made of large boards, divided into compartments, although in Bruges the governor recommends that the boys' dormitory be provided with separate wooden bedsteads for each boy, holding a straw-sack, a feather mattress and his own bedding, 'ghelyckerwys dat se in de meyskinsschole ghedaen hebben' (as they did in the girls' school). The straw that filled the bedstead under the mattress was taken out for the summer and replaced by clean straw in August, before the cold days came.²² The mattresses were repaired once a year or at least every two years, and when they were worn out, the feathers were shaken out and the textile covers reused for the work on others.²³ 'Slaplakene' (sleeping sheets) belonged to the personal 'outfit' of the child, were kept personal, and washed regularly.

The Bruges school order advises to place many pisspots in the dormitory before the cold nights come (ill. 242), and it pays a considerable amount of attention to problems surrounding the 'heymelichey' (latrine). The recommendations start with placing a barrel next to the toilet, for those who only have to pee, but continues into building a complete new toilet, with a new cesspit dug and attached to a new drain and a new connection to a supply of clean water from the Minnewater. The toilets itself should be accessible from upstairs, where the children live, as well as from downstairs, from the school. It should have at least ten or twelve toilet holes, and a separate toilet room for the master, with a lock on its door. There should be windows for air, with window glass, and a gallery to make sure that the children and the master are not seen sitting at the toilet from the water. A lottery had to be organized to raise the money needed for the improved school toilet.²⁴

There is repeated mention of the children being made to wash their feet, and to the changing and washing of underwear, upper clothes, socks and bedding. The

17 Van Run 1995: 130.

18 See also Reicke 1971: 54 and 56.

19 Schouteet 1960: 134 and 60.

20 Schouteet 1960: 107.

21 Schouteet 1960: 139.

22 Schouteet 1960: 93, 105.

23 Schouteet 1960: 98.

24 Schouteet 1960: 188, 204–219 ('Concept der heymelichey').



ill. 242. *Pisspots from the Leiden Grammar school. Alphen, Provinciaal Depot van Bodemvondsten Zuid-Holland. © Author.*



ill. 243. *Bowl, spoon, knife and lice comb excavated in the Leiden Grammar school. Alphen, Provinciaal Depot van Bodemvondsten Zuid-Holland. © Author.*

lay-out of the building and the children's diet are adjusted to ward off sickness: a permanent supply of clean water to make beer is arranged, as the children got sick of drinking from the rain barrel, and trees in the schoolyard are cut down to provide more light and air, as the dark and damp was not seen as healthy. In September the children are given special herbs against worms. Encountering the smell of the latrine in the morning, on an empty stomach, was seen as a particular problem; hence the efforts to make a better toilet, in a different location.²⁵

Another hygienic issue typical for schools – up to the present day – is head lice. A complete comb with a fine-toothed side and two fragments of similar combs used for delousing were excavated in the Grammar school of Leiden (ill. 243).²⁶ The Bruges regulations order that in a special rack or closet – 'camschapraykin' – two

²⁵ Schouteet 1960: 111.

²⁶ Alphen, Provinciaal Depot voor Bodemvondsten Zuid-Holland, inv. nos. h 1983/7.46-44, 46 and 47.

dozen good and clean combs are kept for combing the clean heads, and half a dozen only to be used for scabied and sore heads; there were at least usually fewer heads with lice than without. The combs should be kept separated, to keep the dirty heads from infecting the others: ‘elck kindt, een quaet schurft hooft hebbende, den zynen cam appaert, updat de ghave ende zuver hoofden daermede niet besmet en werden’ (every child with a badly scabied head, his comb apart, so the good and clean heads will not be infected with it). The author even suggests that the comb rack should be equipped with six or eight little drawers that can slide open, and to write the name of the child with a bad or sore head on the front and place his comb inside the drawer. When the child is cured, the name can be erased and the name and comb of another infected person put in place.²⁷

7.2 Pupils

Dress

The population of any medieval or Renaissance school was made up largely of pupils, far more male than female. Their ‘school uniforms’ can be reconstructed from a few finds, combined with some detailed descriptions and many depictions. Clothes, shoes and hats were distributed centrally to pupils at many schools, not only at those housing orphans or foundlings. Many schools had rules governing what was to be worn in school. This caused a relatively uniform dress, that added to the easy recognition of schoolboys, and strengthened the image people had of them – and that we can retrace. In schools for the poor, the clothes were usually marked more literally as well: the Bruges school order mentions apart from the colours used for the clothes (red and blue) that all children attending the Bogardenschool should always wear the ‘B’ sewn onto their sleeve, so that everybody can see that they are the poor children society is spending its money on.²⁸

When school clothes are mentioned in the sources of the sixteenth century, the colour most frequently worn is black – the colour of school uniforms well into the twentieth century in many countries. However, considerable variation was possible. Tunics, hose and hats have been depicted in all colours of the rainbow, often worn in contrasting shades. The sixteenth-century costume books of Matthäus and Veit Konrad Schwarz (see § 4.4) show a lot of variation in colour as well: in addition to black clothes blue, yellow, red, and green cloaks are worn, with white, green, red and striped hose, and a red or brown beret. Cloak, beret, jerkin, hose and shoes remain the basis, but variation is shown also in the types of clothes: various types of shoes, various cuts of cloaks, and felt hats, broad-rimmed hats and straw hats in addition to the beret. Of course, the variation in costumes is the very subject of these books, but for the same reason the depictions are as faithful as they get – it is this variation we often miss from other sources. When the order of the Bruges school mentions that the boys should be made to take off their warm ‘upperrocx’ (jerkin) when at home and be allowed to ‘laten loopen alzoo ende zitten in der schole in huerlieder onderrocxkins’ (walk around and sit in school in their undershirts) we get a rare glimpse of a sixteenth-century schoolroom on a hot day.²⁹

Basically, boys wore shirts and possibly loin cloths on their body, over which they wore during the daytime either hose and tunic (called ‘rock’ in Dutch), or – from c.1500 onwards – stockings, short trousers and a jerkin. Cloaks were cut wide and worn only outside, combined with a hat, usually of a flat, beret-like type. Cloak

27 Schouteet 1960: 143.

28 Schouteet 1960: 121 and 129.

29 Schouteet 1960: 129.

and beret, together with a bag slung over the shoulder, seem to have been the most recognizable elements of the schoolboy's costume, as they are depicted worn by children when it is necessary to underline that they are schoolboys, as in the case of the 'puer' in a tree with the phases of life is a pupil (see ill. 56 & 160) or when the Schwarz boys are portrayed in their costume books on their way to school (see ill. 150); these books also show that other types of clothes were worn once they had left school. In Alpertsbach as well, a cloak is supplied to every schoolboy in his first year, and a new 'Spanish hat' every autumn (see § 3.7). The combination of cloak, hat and bag was a persistent image as well, as these three things are also the main ingredient of the 'petit écolier' (small schoolboy) that since the end of the nineteenth century has functioned as the logo of a type of biscuits sold in continental Europe (see ill. 263).

In the earliest manuscripts showing school scenes, whether from the Low Countries, Germany, Great Britain, France, or Italy, the boys are wearing tunics, hose, and low shoes, sometimes with chaperons over head and shoulders (see ill. 94). Some fifteenth-century Flemish manuscripts show boys wearing scarves over their tunics (see ills. 59 & 106). Berets are worn in images from the fourteenth century onwards, mostly black, but in vivid colours as well (see ill. 261), and sometimes adorned with brooches (see ill. 251).³⁰ In sixteenth-century Dutch and German images of schoolboys, berets become the norm (see ill. 4). A hat with a broad rim is seen in some fifteenth-century Northern Netherlandish manuscripts (see ill. 15) and in the sixteenth-century Schwarz costume books as well. Trousers and jerkin are most prominent in sixteenth-century German images, but even there they are worn side by side with tunics and hose.

Young girls wore shirts under dresses, often tunic-shaped, and aprons that covered either only the thighs or the upper body as well. They wore cloaks outside as well, which seem to have been a bit longer than the boys' cloaks. Most girls covered their hair, usually by a scarf tied at the front or in the neck (see ills. 126 & 258), although very young girls are often depicted wearing a tightly fitted linen cap, fastened by a ribbon under the chin – even very rich girls like the princess Claude of France (see ill. 259). This cap was worn by small boys as well (see ill. 135). The group of girls sitting together on the ground floor of the school depicted by Dirck Vellert (see ill. 117) all wear headscarves tied at the back and aprons with straps across the back.

For a loin cloth, a long and small piece of linen was wrapped first around the waist and then between the legs, folded or tied at the front. One of the images in a fourteenth-century English encyclopaedia *Omne Bonum* shows a schoolboy being beaten by his teacher (see ill. 17): his tunic has been pushed up, showing that the boy wears a white loin cloth with a long flap.³¹ This is the only image I know where a loin cloth is shown in this setting: usually, the pupil is hit on his bare buttocks. As far as I know, no loin cloth – just a long strip of linen – has been identified among textile finds at all, but it was worn by most men in the Middle Ages and at least under trousers it was commonly used. Two sets of underwear are mentioned alongside a robe, tunic, stockings and shoes as the 'trousseau' of a boy sent to school in Bury St. Edmunds in 1255.³²

The basic piece of clothing however was the shirt that was worn by both men and women during the day as an undershirt and by night as a nightshirt. It was considered essential and personal: therefore all pupils that entered the boarding

30 Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms Canon Misc. 416, f 1r (Italian, fourteenth century, young students in Bologna, see: Orme 2006: 82); Bergamo, Pinacoteca dell'Accademia Carrara, inv.no. 923 (Italian, first half sixteenth century), London, National Gallery, inv.no. NG 1131 (Italian – Pontormo – end sixteenth century)

31 London, British Library, mss Royal 6 E VI, pars I, f 214r, see: Freedman Sandler 1996, vol. II: 80.

32 Orme 2006: 133.

ill. 244. *Jerkin from the Alpirsbach find. Photo taken from: Mönche und Scholaren 1995: 51.*



ill. 245. *Reconstruction of boy's trousers, excavated in Groningen from a ditch filling at Prinsenstraat, c.1580. Groningen, Stichting Monument & Materiaal. © Author.*



school at Bogarde in Bruges were expected to bring two or three shirts ('hemdekins'), no matter how poor they were. Shirts were also both requested from and paid for specifically by the governors, as they had to be replaced quite often. When the linen is bought, the wives of the governors are instructed to make shirts in three sizes, with small, flat collars and two linen ribbons sewn to the collar for tying.³³ The appearance of the shirts worn by schoolboys in the sixteenth century is known to us from a lucky find in the cloister of Alpirsbach, where three shirts were put away in a bundle. All three are quite simple, long, white shirts, with tight sleeves and a low collar attached separately (see ill. 88).

Stockings or hose were usually for one leg and could be short (reaching under the knee) or long (reaching to the crotch). They were not elastic but kept in place by ribbons (see ill. 163) or by attaching them to a girdle or to the upper clothes, as the jerkin from Alpirsbach (ill. 244) shows (see § 3.7). They came in large quantities: in Bruges the school bought them in loads of 150 pairs, in three sizes: large, medium and small, but more in medium, because most children in the

³³ Schouteet 1960: 100.

³⁴ Schouteet 1960: 101.

school had that size.³⁴ Some stockings have been preserved from Alpirsbach as well, and these are comparable to some woollen stockings found in a sixteenth-century ditch in Groningen, that is not associated with the school but with an orphanage – it contained a number of clothes for young children, all worn out and repaired repeatedly,³⁵ and among these are a small boys' pair of trousers (ill. 245). Although fit for a smaller boy, about the age of four, the trousers are of the same 'knickerbocker' type as seen in depictions of schoolboys,³⁶ for instance worn by small Veit Konrad Schwarz when taken to the village primary school (see ill. 150).

In many illustrations pupils wear low, open shoes, but most of the shoes recovered from school site excavations – there are tens of shoes in the assemblages of Groningen, Leiden, and Gorinchem – are ankle-high boots with simple lacing, known to be worn by most children in the Later Middle Ages.³⁷ Shoes in these times often had a single-layer sole that wore out quickly, and the feet of children still growing need new shoes every half year or so anyway. Unsurprisingly, keeping their pupils shod was a key problem for almost all schools. Shoes were given to school children on festive days, begged for in large quantities from authorities and benefactors, and bought by boarding schools on a regular basis. The children attending the Bogardenschool in Bruges received new shoes at least two times a year, as the regulations instruct buying at least a hundred pairs of shoes with socks in April (before the most important procession in Bruges) and 140 pairs in August (before it got cold), while in April a shoemaker was ordered to adapt and repair all the children's shoes and his services were used all year long.³⁸ Interestingly, the governor recommends that the school be a little reserved in their purchases in spring, even if it is for the main procession, because he knows that the children prefer worn out shoes and socks in school in summer:

'Want ghy dese kinderen ghaet nieuwe coussen ende schoyen jeghens natuere, als den schoonen zomere ancompt ende de zonne heet schynt, dat dickwils de voorn. kinderen liever hebben in de schole te zittene met dinne ofte gheene coussins ende oude schoens, danne die goede warme coussins van dicken lakene ende groote zware schoens van leder ende roete te draghene [...]. Maer nu en rade ic anders niet te doene, danne de oude coussins behoerlicken te vermaken ende de schoens, die 't van nooden hebben, te doen lappene, ende 's daechs voor den Heiligen-Bloetdach elck kindt zyn schoens wel schoone te doen zwartene; daarmede ghenouch wesende omme in de voorn. processie te gane'.³⁹

(Because you dress these children in new socks and shoes against nature, for when beautiful summer comes and the sun shines hot, the children mentioned prefer often to sit in school with thin or no socks and old shoes on over wearing good warm socks of thick cloth and big heavy shoes of leather and soot [...]. But for now I advise to only alter the old socks properly and to have the shoes, that need it, patched up, and the day before Holy Blood Day let each child blacken his shoes anew; that will suffice for taking part in the procession already mentioned).

School equipment

There is a clear congruence between the objects depicted in school scenes (see Chapters 4 to 6) and those excavated from school sites (see Chapter 3). Almost all items for teaching, writing, reading and punishment (see Chapter 2) have been found in schools as well. Exclusively tied to education are only the hornbook and the paddle, and these are the only objects that still point to

³⁵ Wieringa et al 2001: 88–90.

³⁶ For instance, worn at a primary school in a sixteenth century German print, and at a secondary school in a 1592 print, see: Reicke 1971: 55 and 56.

³⁷ Willemsen 1998: 47 (ills. 10 & 11).

³⁸ Schouteet 1960: 85, 114.

³⁹ Schouteet 1960: 86.

a pupil or a teacher even if they have been found outside a school context. Of course, many objects that have been found during the excavations in schools and pupil's houses are not meant for education, including items for eating and playthings. They will be dealt with when describing the meals and the games of the pupils later on.

Schoolwork consists basically of two activities: reading or listening to reading, and writing. 'Me thinkest thou lackest [I think you lack] many things that is need for a good scholar to have: first a penner [pencase] and an inkhorn, and then books,' as an Oxford master said to his pupil in 1490.⁴⁰ Essentially, pupils brought their own equipment to school. Basic objects were a writing case, usually consisting of pen case and inkwell, and a writing tablet or other type of notebook. 'At the last fair, my uncle on my father's side gave me a penner and an inkhorn, and my uncle on my mother's side gave me a penknife. Now, and I had a pair of tables, I lacked nothing,' noted an English schoolboy of the fifteenth century.⁴¹ Although wax tablets with styluses and slates with slate pencils are mostly associated with schoolwork, the implements for writing in ink have also been recovered from school sites, depicted in school scenes and mentioned in school regulations. The basic necessities mentioned by Valcoogh are 'papier, inckt, pennen, t'bort' (paper, ink, pens, the board) and without those, no pupil should come to school. The master is advised to check on Saturdays if the pupils all have three pens in their pencases, ink, paper and a board to support the sheets, and if there are no folds or stains in their books.⁴²

ill. 246. *Boy with writing case and hat. Detail of French tapestry The Miracle of St. Quentin, second half of the sixteenth century. Paris, Louvre Museum, inv.no. MR R 825. © Author.*



⁴⁰ Orme 2006: 134.

⁴¹ Orme 2006: 134.

⁴² Schotel 1875: 14 and 19.

Of the wooden writing tablets preserved, the largest one with trapezoid handle can be associated with the Cathedral school in Bois-le-Duc (see ill. 83). A large number of inscribed tablets and a wax tablet book were recovered from the school in Lübeck, and a set of nine wax tablets was found in the cesspit of the Groningen grammar school (see ill. 67). These writing boards date to the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries, and can be seen both taken to school and in use in class in contemporary depictions (see ill. 4).⁴³ Inscribed slates have been found in Coventry, Gorinchem and Zwolle, the latter two also providing slate pencils. Metal styluses were recovered from all the school sites mentioned in Chapter 3 except Groningen, but there the tip of a wooden pen with a metal point has been found.

The number and diversity of finds show that all types of inkwells were used in school. They have been found in the cesspits in Groningen, Lübeck and Coventry, and cover the range from inkhorns and portable circular inkpots to stone ink basins adapted from building fragments. At least two of them show owner's marks: a cross with two triangles on a horn inkpot from Groningen and the initials HW on one of the stone inkwells from Coventry. Marks like these must have made it easier to recover your own inkwell, especially after they had been refilled simultaneously, as was common in schools.

The Groningen inkwells were suitable for carrying and would have formed part of double writing cases, like the ones worn by the pupils killing St. Felix (see ill. 235), the Schwarz schoolboys (see ill. 148 & 265), and the children attending school with St. Firmin in Amiens (see ill. 144). These writing cases appear as 'scrittorisen' amongst the objects provided to the poor children in the Bogardenschool in Bruges, where a gilded writing case formed the third prize in a competition of reading Latin.⁴⁴ In the latter finish it was a luxury object, but the thing itself may be considered a basic need of schoolchildren (ill. 246). The competition also gives away other implements that were wanted by schoolchildren: apart from new clothes and accessories (the first prize is a nice beret, the second a pair of shoes, the eighth a dozen laces, the ninth a belt) there is a prayer book (fourth prize), a handful of paper (fifth), a dozen pens (sixth) and a comb (seventh) – the mentioning of a dozen pens is a good indication of how many were used in school. All these items have been actually discovered among school waste.

The double writing case is depicted regularly as worn by pupils, outside as well as in class. The pupil seated on a bench in the foreground listening to the schoolmaster drawn by Dürer in 1515 (ill. 247) has the writing case hanging from his belt, while using its contents for writing in a book.

In addition to writing equipment, pupils needed books, as the texts say, and this is true for every level. Depictions of schoolchildren of various ages show them holding books themselves, and the stages of the curriculum in schools are often denoted by the finishing of a certain text, starting with the grammar book of Donatus. Until the second half of the fifteenth century, all texts used in school were manuscripts. Even in miniatures and other works of art from the fourteenth and fifteenth century, however – from the Low Countries, France, England and Germany – schoolmasters are often depicted with a range of books, while pupils usually hold a book in their lap or in their hands, from which they are reading. It may also be assumed that the pupil, who is holding a book behind him in an effort to prevent his buttocks from being beaten by his teacher, was imagined using his own book for this.⁴⁵

43 See ill. 136; *École au Moyen Age* 2007: 32.

44 Schouteet 1960: 87, 129, and 119 ('verghulden scrittoris').

45 Pupils holding their own books for instance in ill. 15, 94, 103, 106, 115, 118 & 158, see also: Reicke 1971: 54 (German woodcut to printed Donatus edition c.1500); misericord at St. Botolph in Boston.



ill. 247. Albrecht Dürer, *The schoolmaster*, 1510. Berlin, National Graphic Collection, inv.no. B 133. © KSK.

School texts are among the earliest books printed in most countries. The invention of the printing process made many more books available, both for teachers and for pupils. Glosses and ownership inscriptions show that pupils now were able to buy more of their own texts, in which they could make notes. Printing certainly caused education to become a more written thing. That also means that from the fifteenth century, much more writing equipment was used in school, especially pens and ink to make notes on paper. In turn, more of this equipment got lost, which partly accounts for the rise in finds of school material from this century onwards.

That books were owned by pupils is underlined by the custom of awarding books as prizes in school competitions. This habit is known from the Grammar schools, where at the end of every school year the best students in Latin were awarded so-called prize books, ordered on purpose for this occasion and many times fitted with a special dedication to the winner. Latin school prize books of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were the subject of a thesis by J. Spoelder.⁴⁶ He shows that the books chosen as prizes were adapted to the level of knowledge of the boy awarded them, but that they are never basic schoolbooks like the *Donatus*, *Alexander de VillaDei* or the *Disticha Catonis*. It must be supposed that every schoolboy already had those, or at least had used them and would not need his own copy.

46 See: Spoelder 2000.



That books were seen as necessary for study is documented by the books bought by the governors of institutions of child care for the education received by orphans and foundlings, whether in Italy (see § 7.5) or in the Low Countries. Also these underprivileged children had their competitions, and books are among the prizes here too. At the Bogardenschool in Bruges, the schoolboys who were best in reading Latin psalms from their (own) books were awarded, among other things, a prayer book. In written sources too, books are alluded to as the pupil's property, as in c.1430 when provisions are made in a Middelburg schoolroom for a place where the pupils can put 'their books'.⁴⁷

Books and other school necessities were carried in a schoolbag or school basket. A school sack has been preserved in the Alpirsbach find (see ill. 57) and features in most school scenes in both Schwarz's costume books (see ill. 149). Schoolbags, worn over one shoulder, can be seen in earlier images as well, from the fifteenth century onwards; even the Christ child carried one on his way to school.⁴⁸ In all these depictions, the schoolbags are held by boys. Baskets are shown in for instance the killing of St. Felix (see ill. 235), the Amiens relief (see cover ill.) and the Vellert print (see ill. 117); they are used by both boys and girls.

Behaviour

The prominent place of punishment in the image and the reality of medieval and Renaissance education indicates that pupils were no angels then either. As school had long hours, and classrooms were crowded, a lot must have been going on, as is stressed by the parodies of school scenes (see § 4.1), where pupils – and monkeys acting like them – are engaged in all kinds of distracting activities. Some of those will have been merely mischief, but there was bullying and serious fighting going on as well.

ill. 248. *Medieval and later names incised in church bench. Zwolle, Church of St. Michael.*
© Author.

⁴⁷ 'Dair die scoelkinderen hoire spise ende hoire boucken op legghen mochte', see: Fortgens 1956: 50.

⁴⁸ See also ills. 4, 5, 15, 138 & 179 and Catteuw 2003: 5.

A former pupil of a school held in the church of Kirkham confessed later on that he used to aim stones at the top of the steeple on the baptismal font,⁴⁹ which brings to mind both the blowpipes confiscated at the Groningen Grammar school (see § 3.1) and a leather ball that was found behind the statues of a sculpted altar in the Marienkirche in Lübeck.⁵⁰ A twelve-year old schoolboy named John Stanley is known to have been killed by a ball that hit him on the head, according to a 1470 grave slab in Elford (Staffordshire), but that is described as an accident.⁵¹

Three shirts, taken off and discarded off hastily, are evidence of a serious fight at the evangelic school in Alpirsbach; one of them has a blood stain (see § 3.7). The penalty that was commonly imposed in cases of fighting must have been high enough to prompt them to get rid of the evidence. Fighting could lead to material damage: two boys wrestling in school demolished the school equipment of a fellow pupil who sat there writing, as is known from the description of the life of one of the future Brethren of Common Life (see § 1.3).

In some schools, writing your name on the wall of the dormitory became a ritual, as witnessed by names, dates and poems left by the boys of the Alpirsbach school (see § 3.7). Pupils must have been tempted to leave their names in other places, at least as graffiti in school benches. There are a large number of names, from at least the fifteenth century onwards, in the benches of the Church of St. Michael in Zwolle, in the rows where the school- and choirboys used to sit (ill. 248). The costume book of Matthäus Schwarz gives evidence of another type of misbehaviour typical for pupils: skipping school (see ill. 148). Finally, Valcoogh mentions the stealing of money and *in natura* books, pens and paper.⁵²

7.3 Teachers

Dress

Teachers at secondary schools in principle had to be *magister artium*, which meant that they attended at least some years of academic education. Their dress, as depicted, does overlap with the dress of scholars in general. Their outward appearance can be summed up by anything that would make being seated for a long time endurable. Basically, this meant clothes to keep warm. Teachers are generally depicted wearing long cloaks, lined with fur, and often shawls or hoods over them, completed with muffs to put their hands in and sometimes a foot-stove in their chair. Teachers are often seen wearing warm berets inside; these are usually depicted as black or brown, but could be other colours as well (see ill. 115).⁵³ One of these berets known so well from portraits of teachers has been recovered from the cesspit of the grammar school in Groningen (see ill. 65).

Attributes

The extraordinary 1591 poetic manual for village schoolmasters written by Dirck Adriaensz Valcoogh (see § 1.3) holds as one of its first themes a rhyming enumeration of the equipment and books a schoolmaster should have: ‘Wat ghereetschap en Boecken den Schoolmeester tot zijn Ambt behoort te hebben.’ It mentions all the objects as known from depictions of teachers and from excavations on school sites, adding their contemporary terms and uses, and is worth quoting at length:

49 Orme 2006: 136.

50 Willemsen 1998: 61.

51 For this information my thanks go to Ineke van Beek; from her research project on medieval grave monuments for children carried out under supervision of prof.dr. A.M. Koldeweij of the Radboud University Nijmegen.

52 Schotel 1875: 25.

53 See for clear specimen also the portrait of teacher Thomas Wolsey c.1530 (Orme 2006: 294), that of astronomer Nicolas Krater c.1528 (Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv.no. 1343) and all portraits of Erasmus.

'Al die een Ambacht wil leeren en nemen ter handen,
 En wil maken dat zijn werck niet com to schanden,
 Hij siet toe dat hy eerst hebbe ghereetschap goet,
 Daer hij lustigh zijn ambt en handtwerck mede doet.
 Soo sal ick nu hier leeren den Schoolmeesters sampt.
 Wat ghereetschap sy moeten hebben tot haer ampt.
 Ten eersten sal hy hebben een fraeye handtplacke,
 Met een wacker roede van wilghen tacke,
 Met een pennemes dat wel ende scherp can snyden
 Een zantdoosken, daer de zande opt papier deur glyden,
 Met een schryfladeken dat men sluyt als een tas,
 Daer sal hy in houden, pennen, signet, groen was,
 Met een inckt-hoorenken daer boven op staende,
 Een lustighe coker op syn syde, als hy is gaende,
 Een metalen candelae, daer men op set twee lichten,
 Een schoon protocollus, daer hy uyt leert brieven dichten,
 Een rekenbort, daer men met penningen opleyt en reket,
 Een ley, een schrijfboeck, daer hy zyn scholiers in teecket,
 Een blau teghel, met een looper van kieselnigh-steen,
 Daer hy alle coleuren van inckt op wryft seer reen,
 Een slonsken oft lanternken om nae 't uerwerck te gaen,
 Een lustigh camerken, daer zyn dinghen in staen,
 Een bosch ganse pennen en perkamenten vellen,
 Een glas vol swarte inckt daer by stellen,
 Met dry oft vier boeck wit papier,
 Cyffer-boecxkens wel dry ofte vier,
 Een bybel, huysboeck, psalmboeck en testament,
 Met een pultrum, daer een bybel op sal liggen jent:
 Schelpkens, horenkens, groot ende cleyn van fatsoen,
 Daer hy alle coleuren van inckt in sal doen,
 Als sy ghewreven ende worden ghemaect.
 Ghy Schoolmeesters, die tot den School-dienst geraect,
 Coopt dees dingen, om u Ambacht uyt te leeren,
 En mee te doen, begeeft u tot studeren,
 Hy wordt gheert, die begaeft is met conste,
 En by zyn Dorp cryght hy faveur en gonste'.⁵⁴

(He who wants to learn and take up a craft,
 And wishes that his work is not put to disgrace,
 He must first provide himself with good tools,
 To do his job and handwork with cheerfully.
 Therefore I will now teach all the schoolmasters.
 What tools they should have for their job.
 First, he should have a nice paddle,
 And a firm rod of willow twigs,
 And a penknife that cuts good and sharp
 A sandbox through which sand slips onto the paper
 And a writing box that closes like a bag,
 In which he keeps pens, seal, green wax,
 With an inkhorn standing on top,
 A merry case on his side, when he walks,
 A metal candlestick, with two lights placed on it,
 A nice protocollus, to learn to write letters from,
 A counting board, to lay pennies on for counting,
 A slate, a notebook, in which he writes his pupils,
 A blue tile, with a rim of pebblestones,
 On which he neatly rubs all colours of ink,
 A small lantern to take to the clock,
 A cosy room, in which his things stand,
 A bundle of goose pens and sheets of parchment,
 A glass full of black ink put with it,
 And three or four books of white paper,
 Arithmetic books at least three or four,
 A bible, housebook, psalter and Testament,
 And a lectern, on which a bible is placed open,
 Shells, horns, large and small in size,
 In which he can put all colours of ink,
 When they are rubbed and made.
 You, schoolmasters, that end up in school service,
 Buy these things, to learn your job from,
 And to practise it with, go and study,
 He will be honoured, who is talented in arts,
 And from his village he will receive favours).

It is notable that Valcoogh mentions the punishment devices, paddle and rod, as the first necessities. Valcoogh's book mentions them more often, stating that they should be the only devices used for punishment: 'U instrumenten sullen slechts wesen plack en roeden, / Want dat daer boven is dat is van den quaden, / Wee hem die daer comt in 's Dorps onghenaden' (Your instruments shall be just paddle and rod, because what goes over that is bad, beware of falling into disgrace of the village).⁵⁵

Many writing implements are suggested, part of them for use in class, and part to carry, like the 'case on his side', that is also mentioned in Valcoogh's description of how a teacher should look: 'Zijn schrijftuygh opt lyf hebbende, als hy gaet by der straten' (Having his writing tools on his body, when he walks through the streets).⁵⁶ Teachers used writing cases of the same type as pupils did, with an inkwell on one side

⁵⁴ Schotel 1875: 10-11.

⁵⁵ Schotel 1875: 10.

⁵⁶ Schotel 1875: 8, from the 'Achthien deughden en puncten, daer een Schoolmeester behoort mede verciert te zijn' (18 virtues and points, with which a schoolmaster should be equipped).

and a pen case on the other. The list is proof of various methods used side by side, even in village schools: parchment and paper, a slate and a notebook, a counting board and arithmetic books. Pens, parchment, paper and books seem to have been meant not only for the teacher but for the pupils as well: it seems that the 'three or four arithmetic books' could be used at the same time, by additional instructors or pupils studying on their own. Moreover, the schoolmaster made his own ink, in various colours, and he took care of the clock; this is also a recurrent theme in Valcoogh's book, which also includes a whole chapter on how to fix, adjust, oil and clean a clock.⁵⁷

Teachers may well have used bags to carry their equipment to school, but it is not part of the standard image of a teacher. They are shown carrying books often, sometimes in book bags. The instruments they use for punishment, rods and paddles, are sometimes stuck behind the belt or at the side of the seat, but they could be hung in classroom as well. As some paddles have been excavated from what was presumably the house of a teacher, they did take them home, but as most were excavated from school sites, they may well have usually stayed there.

Behaviour towards pupils

The interaction between teachers and pupils may differ most from what we are used to nowadays. The relationship was of a closer nature, the teacher really acting as a 'second father'. It was common for a teacher to take some pupils into his home or to live in the school. In boarding schools the teachers slept in the halls with the boys. In Bruges, it is recommended that one of the best teachers sleep in the 'new dormitory' with the pupils doing Latin, and two others in the 'old dormitory' with the rest.⁵⁸

The teachers and governors had to look into the well-being of the children, in a very practical way: for instance, they had to check from one bed to the other that the children were well covered 'updat se niet van couden en ligghen verstyven' (so that they do not lay freezing from the cold).⁵⁹ Zeger van Male stresses that he knows of other Latin schools [sic] where the under-master every evening, when the children are in bed, goes to check on them to see how they lay, if their feet are not sticking out of the bed, if they do not have a cold or some kind of illness. 'Dit syn meesters die de kinders gade slaen', he adds to his contentment: those masters really keep an eye on their pupils.⁶⁰

In depictions, pupils who come to say their lesson either sit on one knee before their master, or more commonly stand in front of his chair. The test sample is not large, but all images showing schoolchildren kneeling before the master known to me are by artists from the Northern Netherlands or from Flanders, made in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁶¹ Standing pupils are shown in artworks from all over Europe, including the Netherlands. Oral recitation was the only way pupils were tested, and lessons were basically personal, even in large groups, and depended on the quality and goodness of the teacher. Punishment was personal as well: the teacher had the right to hit the pupil when he thought this was necessary (ill. 249).

7.4 Schooldays

The school schedule was based on that used in other communities, like monasteries. The schedule of the Domus Fratrum at Deventer proscribed: 5.00 get up, 5.30 prayers, 6.00-8.00 class, afterwards mass, breakfast and house tasks, an hour of class; 11.00 meal, 14.30 vespers, school and an hour of repetition, 18.30 evening meal and prayers, 20.00 to bed.⁶² School also started early, at six, an hour later in winter. Between eight and nine, the pupils had breakfast together.⁶³

57 Schotel 1875: 35-37.

58 Schouteet 1960: 135.

59 Schouteet 1960: 117.

60 Schouteet 1960: 117.

61 See ill. 15, 94, 154 & 158.

62 Post 1954: 173-174.

63 Schouteet 1960: 134.

Vocabularius rerum



ill. 249. *Schoolmaster and pupils, woodcut on first page of vocabulary book, Augsburg 1495. Brussels, Royal Library, Inc. A 2193. © KBB.*

Time was given to the pupils for making their beds, to wash themselves, and to play. The Bruges order proscribes an hour before the *nones*, from eight to nine, to make the beds, and one from three to four for washing; time off for play should be given on Tuesdays and Thursdays, to the teacher's discretion.⁶⁴ For the town of Wijk bij Duurstede near Utrecht we read: 'There remained the hours between twelve and two, in which no lessons were given, but the pupils played in the churchyard under supervision of the headmaster'.⁶⁵

The basic elements of the school meals in Bruges seem to be bread, butter, and cheese, which was always provided. 'New' or 'sweet milk', that is, fresh milk instead of buttermilk, was seen as especially suitable for small children and destined for them. Meat was bought regularly for making hotchpotch, with carrots as the other main ingredient. When pigs were butchered in November, black pudding was made for the teachers and women, but the boarding children were given a piece each at noon as well.⁶⁶ Fish and white bread were eaten on fasting days, and at Easter around 400 eggs were bought to give each of the children their 'Paesschen-ey' (Easter egg).⁶⁷ The diet as it can be deduced from the finds in the Zwolle boarding house was based on bread porridge, but saw a lot of variety as in Bruges (see § 3.4). A drawing found in Alpirsbach shows the schoolboys around the table, having their meal (ill. 250).

64 Schouteet 1960: 133.

65 Post 1954: 123.

66 Schouteet 1960: 121-122.

67 Schouteet 1960: 80.

ill. 250. *Drawing of schoolboys having a meal from the Alpirsbach find. Photo taken from: Mönche und Scholaren 1995: 46.*



Festivities

In the Middle Ages, like nowadays, school was much more than lessons and learning. Many of the school codes of order include obligations for the pupils to perform services in the church, take part in processions, and rights to festivities like their own feast with the boy bishop. Apart from objects for education, one category stands out in archaeological school contexts: games and toys. It appears that play was as much part of school life as were lessons.

The Bruges school order starts the instructions for the month of January with a description of the ‘conynckfeeste der kinderen’ (children’s king’s feast), that is, the celebration of the Three Kings at Epiphany (January 6). It is so detailed that it needs no explanation, and it gives a unique glimpse into an extraordinary day at school. The day before, the bookkeeper needs to have as many loafs of white bread baked as there are children living at the Bogardenschool, and in the middle of one the baker has to place a big bean, ‘updat se wel vindelicke mach zyn’ (so that it can be found easily). This bread is delivered the next day at 4 pm to the refectory. On the table in front of the crucifix a clean napkin is placed, and a jug of dark beer with two mugs is prepared. Before the chair a tapestry is hung, and a crown brought together with a sceptre ‘die in ’t contoort staat’ (that stands in the office).

Then, all the children living in the house stand at the table in the order ‘alzo zy ghecostumeert zyn te staen etene’ (as they are used to stand and eat). The headmaster and the other masters hand a loaf of bread to every one of the children, and the masters help the children in cutting their white bread in half looking for the bean. He, who has the bread with the bean, is king. He is placed on the chair in

front of the crucifix, with the crown on his head and the sceptre in his hand, and he is poured a mug of beer and drinks. The children then call out: 'Den conynck drynct' (The king drinks). After that, all the children are brought a wooden plate with some hotchpotch with carrots. If it might be a 'visschendach' (fasting day, when no meat was eaten), then they get a bowl of sweet milk to break their white bread in. During dinner, the king drinks again two or three times, so that the children can call out with loud voices: 'The king drinks!' When some of the children are still hungry, they are given a portion of cheese and bread. That will end the 'conynckfeeste'. After dinner, the Lord is praised and grace is said. Then the children can go play for an hour, and after that they go to sleep.

The bookkeeper is reminded that next to the bread, a sheep of medium price should be bought to be hacked into the hotchpotch, or some beef, and carrots as well. And if it turns out to be on a fasting day, he should order the necessary white bread at least eight days in advance, to avoid paying too much.

After the children's king's feast has come to an end, the rector and the other masters get together with the bakers and the servant-girls and appoint a king among them. And who gets to be king or queen this way, gives a party on a day approved of by the governors, in the evening, behind closed doors, only for the people of the house, with a roasted lamb and hotchpotch, 'also onder melcanderen blyde ende vroylicken wesende' (thus being happy and merry among themselves). And that ends the feast.⁶⁸

Another festive day at school was Shrove Tuesday or Mardi Gras, the last d before Lent, which was a holiday all over Europe. On this day, boys broug cocks to school and had them fight duels; the owner of the winning bird w king for the upcoming year. At the end of the twelfth century, it is described England as follows: 'Boys from the schools bring fighting-cocks to their maste and the whole forenoon is given up to boyish sport; for they have a holiday in th schools that they may watch their cocks do battle. After dinner all the youth the city goes out into the fields to a much-frequented game of ball. The schola of each school have their own ball, and almost all the workers of each trad have theirs also in their hands. Elder men, and fathers, and rich citizens com on horseback to watch the contests of their juniors, and after their fashion a young again with the young'.⁶⁹ Cockfighting was a popular theme to allude to Latin exercises; there are Latin poems about it in two English fifteenth-centu pupil's notebooks.⁷⁰

Cockfighting was so specifically connected to Shrove Tuesday that it could b used as an appropriate decoration theme for the month of February, in which Le usually began. This is the case in the famous calendar in the *Heures de la Dauphi Marie-Adélaïde de Savoy*, a French book of hours from the fifteenth century ke in Chantilly,⁷¹ where each month is divided over two lavishly illustrated pages. The second page devoted to February (f 2v) contains both a ball game played with mallets in the lower margin, and a scene of a cockfight at school in the top left part (ill. 251). In a rectangular frame (5 x 3 cms) 17 children are shown seated cross-legged, three of them holding a cock in their lap. To the right is a schoolmaster wearing a red hat, seated somewhat higher in a chair and speaking, obviously acting as a referee to the fight between two cocks in the foreground. Of the school building behind, grey stone walls can be discerned and two small high windows with glass and tracing.

ill. 251. *Cockfight at school, in the Hours of Marie Adélaïde of Savoy, fifteenth century. Chantilly, Musée Condé, ms 76, f 2v. Photo taken from postcard.*



68 Schouteet 1960: 57-58.

69 William FitzStephen, quoted in: Orme 2006: 157.

70 Orme 2006: 157.

71 Chantilly, Musée Condé, ms 76, see Metken 1983; I was exceptionally allowed to study the original manuscript in September 2005.



ill. 252. *Boy bishop depicted on the pulpit of St. John's Cathedral in Bois-le-Duc, c.1566.*
© Theo Gieles.

This manuscript is famous for the games depicted in it, including 'kolf' played in November, and adults and children enjoying fun in the snow together in December; even the shepherds in the Nativity scene are playing 'kolf'. In one of the margins there is a delicate scene of a man teaching a girl to read. Next to the cockfight, more scenes in this calendar seem to allude to festivities throughout the year, that were celebrated at school as well; at folio 1 with the first half of January there is a child under a table with a cake, alluding to the kings' feast at Epiphany, that was characterized by a king chosen through a hidden bean all over Europe.

Plays at school are a separate subject, already studied well.⁷² The rehearsing and performing of plays, often written especially for school theatre, seem to have been important in all schools. Plays are mentioned often in the Bruges' school order, both when they should be performed, and that they should be composed by the governors, both in Latin and in Flemish, and include serious as well as comic plays.⁷³

Boy bishop

As in the whole of Western Europe, in the Netherlands the winter months saw a festive ritual in schools, when one of the boys was elevated to be a temporary bishop.⁷⁴ For a short period, he and his 'humble' retinue took over power, in serious play that was arranged in every detail. The heightday of his temporary power was Holy Innocents (December 28), when he delivered an official sermon to the adults, and went by the doors to collect for the children's feast. But he had many other tasks both in school and in church. The boy bishop is shown in state on a relief decorating the pulpit of St. John's Cathedral in Bois-le-Duc (ill. 252), and on the stalls of the main church (Grote Kerk) of Dordrecht. In both sculptures, the small bishop is taking part in an official procession.⁷⁵ In Dordrecht he can be seen in the upper zone of the northern choir stall, where a boy dressed as a bishop with cloak and mitre is shown in the middle of a larger parade of children. The tails of his cloak are carried by two followers, while a boy just in front of the bishop carries the crozier. The bishop himself holds a monstrance.

⁷² Bloemendal 2003.

⁷³ Schouteet 1960: 66, 89, 95, 145, 187.

⁷⁴ This is the subject of a Ph.D.-research project by Yann Dahhaoui at the University of Geneva; I would like to thank him for the fruitful discussions on the topic and for sharing information over the years.

⁷⁵ Willemsen 1996.



ill. 253. *Teacher and pupils in procession depicted on the choir stalls of the Grote Kerk in Dordrecht, 1540. Photo taken from: Jensma and Molendijk 1983: 86.*

The other participants in this procession are equipped with musical instruments, torches, banners, lanterns, palm branches, books and valuables. On the first panel four boys are carrying a heavy baldachine, while in the middle an object in the shape of a temple is shouldered. This parade, usually interpreted as a mocking procession, is placed between other friezes and series of scenes on these stalls, showing a programme of parades. The northern stalls show secular processions including the entrance of Charles V in Dordrecht in 1540. Indeed, the stalls were completed for this event and the Emperor viewed them when he visited the city that year. The southern stalls show biblical characters and clerics. Between monks, nuns, canons and cardinals, a group of school children is depicted carrying books and crosses, supervised by their teacher (ill. 253).

The boy's attire is proof of a certain material culture of the boy bishop, which is known from other sources as well. A mitre and a brass cross for the children's bishop are mentioned in the order book of St. Martin's Church in Utrecht,⁷⁶ a mitre for the small bishop, decorated with silver, precious stones and embroidery, is mentioned in the inventory of Winchester Cathedral in 1388⁷⁷ and a mitre and bishop's ring for the boy bishop in that of York Minster in 1530.⁷⁸ In many places, special tokens were coined, which were used only during the reign of the small potentate, and could be exchanged for goods or real money; at Bury St. Edmunds a mould for making this 'Nicholas money' has been preserved.

In Dordrecht, the boy bishop was chosen each year on Saint Nicholas' Day (December 6) from the choir boys, like in Utrecht, where he remained in 'power' until St. Agnes (January 21) – a full six weeks. In Dordrecht, the boy bishop had an important role in the procession and feast organised each year in honour of the rector of the grammar school, on St. Lucy (December 13). It is possible that the depiction in the woodwork of the Dordrecht church is inspired by the annual procession on that occasion. Apart from this 'portrait' in woodwork, he is known from the city accounts as well. On September 9th, 1558 a group of gentlemen from Dordrecht testified that knew one Jacob Corneliss., who then attended school in Utrecht, well. They added:

76 'L'évêque des enfants [...] avec sa mitre et sa crosse de cuivre', see: Séjourné 1919-1921: 68-69.

77 Meisen 1931: 322.

78 Dürr 1755: 29.

'Dat den selven Jacob Corneliss. alhier binnen der voers. [stede] schoel gegaen heeft ende aldaer geweest is bisschop ofte dienaer van de gemeene kinderen der selver schole'.⁷⁹

(That the same Jacob Corneliss. went to school in the city mentioned and that he has been bishop, that is servant of all the children of that school there).

This was followed by a testimony of good behaviour and the whole document must be seen as a sort of letter of recommendation by the school, proving that Jacob's holding of the position of children's bishop is clearly seen as positive for his *resumé*.

Processions

The reign of the boy bishop was not the only occasion for the schoolchildren to parade in procession through the city. A group of schoolchildren wearing berets, one holding an open book, is part of the procession of the 'Confrérie de la Charité' (Charity Brotherhood) as it is depicted in the windows of the Church of St. Ouen in Pont-Audemer; the pupils are positioned directly behind the bells, candles and banners.⁸⁰ Also in other depictions of processions, the schoolchildren, often still holding their hats in their hands or carrying their bags, take up a prominent place at the front of the parade.⁸¹ These images correspond with the roles mentioned for the pupils of the schools in local processions in written sources. In the Bruges school order, a number of processions is mentioned, not only the large Bruges

ill. 254. *Procession, Book of Hours, French, early sixteenth century. Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms Douce 276, f 10v. Photo taken from: Orme 2006: 161.*



79 Oude Rechterlijke Archieven Dordrecht 701 f 2r no. 5, cited in: Jensma and Molendijk 1983: 165.

80 *CVMA* 2001: 35, 194.

81 For instance: Paris, Louvre, inv.no. RF 2045: Master of the Holy Kinship, Retable with the Seven Joys of the Virgin for the Benedictine convent of Cologne, c.1480, procession of children holding candles in front of the Presentation in the Temple, one of the children holding a hat in his hand.

procession on Holy Blood day, but some as well that were instigated by the school and meant to raise money – in fact these are well-planned begging rounds around the city.

Another kind of procession is depicted in a French Book of Hours from the fifteenth century, where a May-procession from out of a school is shown in the left and bottom margin of page 10v (ill. 254).⁸² Under a dome and arch are a wall and a tiled floor, and on the threshold stands a master in black and dark blue, with a white jabot and a black beret, holding a rod. Twelve pupils are walking along the rim of the manuscript towards the right, six carrying sticks with halberds, one only the stick – did he forget the halberd? –, one carries a sword and two parade May-branches with leaves and fruit. In addition to these, nine children carry white bags with unknown contents, shut at the top, mostly over their shoulders. In the foreground, two boys are fighting, having dropped their bags. The pupils wear short, brightly coloured tunics with contrasting hose and black open shoes; they have coloured or black berets on their heads. Five wear brooches and one has a purse on his belt.

Somewhat further on in the manuscript, in between all kinds of children's games, is a carnivalesque procession that might be a parody on the school procession above. On page 44r there is a strange man with four children, all dressed up, carrying toy windmills on sticks, wearing white caps with wooden spoons on them. The adult man is wearing a high pointed cap, as many scholars wore, but with spoons on both sides, and he holds a sort of wooden paddle in one hand and in the other a handle with feathers in it, that seems a mock-birching rod – with which only the softest of hitting was possible. This procession is unique, but the May-procession is not: it is a depiction found generally in the calendar of May of a group of Ghent-Bruges manuscripts of the beginning of the sixteenth century, where the procession is in the context of children's games too.⁸³ To picture the procession leaving from a school is original however, and it would be interesting to know what is in the white bags.

Play

Medieval people knew well that the bow could not always be tight, and room was made in every school schedule for play. In the Bruges school order, the children are encouraged to have fun together after the reading contest and to fraternize, so they 'hebben met elckandere alle tsamen verblyden zouden ende zo recreacie hebben, als broerkins ghelyck' (have with each other all together fun and recreate, like brothers).⁸⁴

Toys and playthings are among the finds of all school sites and boarding houses: a buzzer and some dice from Liège, marbles from Liège, Groningen, Coventry and Gorinchem, wooden spinning tops (ill. 255) and balls from Groningen and Gorinchem, and knucklebones filled with lead from Groningen. Gaming pieces, that could be used in any board game, were amongst the finds from Coventry and Lübeck, and a gaming board (for playing nine men's morris) on a wooden plate is preserved in the Alpirsbach find. Some more have been scratched into church benches, especially those where the boys used to sit – one preserved in the City Museum of Zutphen holds a screen for 'molenspel' or nine men's morris like in Alpirsbach. From the Groningen school even some blowpipes were excavated, made from hollowed out elder branches and suspiciously complete; they vividly evoke the image of just one pebble too many blown at the teacher's back, pupils

⁸² Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms Douce 276, f 10v.

⁸³ See: Willemsen 2005: 419–430.

⁸⁴ Schouteet 1960: 120.



that were called forward, devices that were seized and ostentatiously thrown away in the toilet block.

Time for play is mentioned in various school orders, and the Schwarz costume books depict the games played by Matthäus and Veit Konrad in their schooldays, both in summer and winter. The *colloquia* too mention playthings and games played at school: with balls, knucklebones, nuts, but an early form of tennis as well. In the unauthorized *colloquium* left with a Torrentinus text, one of the schoolboys has even traded writing equipment for toys: he exchanged his writing tablet for some nuts (see § 1.4).

LEFT PAGE:

ill. 255. *Boys spinning tops in a cloister, damaged Flemish manuscript c.1500. Munich, National Bavarian Library, Clm 23250, f 83r. © BSB.*

7.5 Social status and gender

Bruges: A school for orphans

Education was by no means only for the elite, and not even only for middle-class children. In fact, most of the penniless orphans in the cities of the Netherlands went to school. There is written documentation on this for the city of Antwerp, where information on the orphanages for boys ('Knechtjeshuis') and girls ('Maagdenhuis') was published extensively by E. Geudens at the end of the nineteenth century.⁸⁵ Regulations from other charitable institutions have been preserved as well, but among all sources *Den Spiegel Memoriael sprekende van 't gouvernement van den godshuuse ten Bogaerde*,⁸⁶ a manual for the organization of the boarding school in the house Bogaert in Bruges – already quoted from at length – stands out because of its unparalleled details on the provisions made on a daily basis for the poor children living there. The manual was written in 1555 by Zeger van Male, who had been a governor of the institution until shortly before – he is passing on his experiences to his successors.

Arranged according to the months of the year, the manual lists all purchases and agreements that should be made for 'den aermen scholieren ten Bogaerde ende aerne maechdekens in de Ezelstrate' (the poor pupils in the Bogaerde school and the poor girls in the dependence in the Ezelstraat – elsewhere they are referred to as 'the two schools'),⁸⁷ but much more, as we have seen: from the sequence of actions at festivities to the route through the city best taken by processions in which the children begged for alms. That the 350 children in the institution, both boarders and those living outside, should receive an education is, of course, the starting point: the institution is always referred to as a school, in which pupils learned and lived. The enumerations of what the children are entitled to include their right to an education first; they should be: 'gheleert, gecleet ende ghevoedt' (taught, dressed and fed).

Zeger van Male does not address the issues of what should be taught and how. As he was a governor, not a teacher, he must have recognized the curriculum, programme and teaching methods to be the responsibility of the rector, something from which governors should stay aloof.⁸⁸ His text is aimed at the governors, who should only be concerned with providing the necessary material infrastructure. In this, a glimpse of schoolwork can be found: for instance, in the discussion of the school library, when advising the governors to take stock of the books once a year. Among the accessories to be given to the children with their clothing are belts, writing cases and berets ('riemen, scriftorisen ende bonnetten'⁸⁹) – as they are depicted on the schoolboys in the Schwarz costume books of the same time (see § 4.4). The children may have needed belts and hats anyway, but only their school attendance required a writing case.

⁸⁵ Geudens 1889 and Geudens 1895.

⁸⁶ Manuscript preserved with two copies in the City Archives of Bruges, published in: Schouteet 1960.

⁸⁷ Schouteet 1960: 68 and 73 ('den twee scholen').

⁸⁸ Schouteet 1960: 31.

⁸⁹ Schouteet 1960: 87.

Siena: The education of foundlings

In Italy, good care and education was provided to the least-privileged as well. In the 'Pellegrinaio' (pilgrim's hall) in the fourteenth-century hospital of Santa Maria della Scala, opposite the steps of Siena cathedral, a series of large frescoes highlights the charity tasks performed by the hospital, including one of the first impressions in art of the inside of a hospital, with sick and wounded people. The hall was built before 1379,⁹⁰ long and narrow after the example of cloister refectories and French hospitals. One of the frescoes is devoted to the care, education and marriage of a female orphan (ill. 256). It was painted by Domenico di Bartolo shortly before 1444,⁹¹ commissioned by Rector Giovanni di Francesco Buzzichelli, a learned politician who was influenced by humanism. When a traditional decoration with

ill. 256. *Care for foundlings, fresco in the pellegrinaio of the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala in Siena, Domenico di Bartolo, c.1444. Photo taken from postcard.*



⁹⁰ *Siena* 1987: 61.

⁹¹ On January 24, 1444 'Maestro Domenico di Bartolo' was paid for delivering five paintings in the hall, including one depicting the 'lattra el maritare dale fanciule' (the milk and marriage of the girls); see: *Siena* 1987: 9.

saints' lives was half completed, he had a change of heart and had the room finished with episodes showing the history of the hospital itself, in the 'modern' style with perspective. His aim can be described as an attempt 'to highlight the charitable role played by laymen in the Hospital' and as a reflection of the (preferred) declining control of the church over it.⁹²

The fresco shows three stages in the life of the orphan girl. In the middle, a swaddled child is accepted by a woman, surrounded by scenes of nursing, cradling and feeding. To the left, the young girl stands before a teacher surrounded by classmates, and in the right half of the picture the grown-up girl – depicted wearing the same colours as the school girl – is marrying a man in rich clothes. In the school scene, displaying a marble floor, the girl wears an orange-and-green dress and has a white coif on her hair, and she is holding a book. The teacher, in cloak and headdress, has a strict look and is pointing in the girl's book, while holding a rod or slat. On his desk is another book, while an inkhorn and a rod are on its side. The girl and her teacher are surrounded by other children, studying from books, one of them writing with a quill on a sheet laid on the bench before him and holding an inkwell as well.

The care for abandoned children was an added task for the hospital that had the care for pilgrims (on their way to Rome) and the poor and sick as its first goals. These three categories of people were related; pilgrims lived on alms like other poor, and rich people would be treated at home when sick. Siena hospital was 'modern' as it offered not only help but specialized in actually curing illnesses, and that it relied not only on divine intervention but on surgery, medication, diets and hygiene as well. The raising of foundlings was a task of this hospital mentioned in its fourteenth-century statutes, that originated in the care for orphans collected amongst the sick and poor. Poverty, high birthrates, parents that died and illegitimate children accounted for quite a number of foundlings. Ironically, the quality of life granted to orphans within hospitals may have caused their numbers to rise.

From the middle of the fourteenth century at least, the hospital had a *pila*, a niche outside the door where foundlings could be safely placed. The newborn boys and girls were either nursed inside the house or boarded out to women who took them home to feed and raise them; in both cases the wet-nurses were paid. Inside the hospital, the sexes were separated at the age of eight; boys were given in adoption, sent to a public school, or to a master to learn a trade; when they were twenty, they were sent away with a little money, although they were welcome to stay and help out in the hospital. The preserved fourteenth-century statutes say that the boys, 'when they will be of the age that they are to be placed in an art, each must be placed in the art which he best likes, and as seems best to the *camarlingo*.' Girls were adopted as well, while those that remained in the hospital were trained for women's work that could be performed either inside or outside the hospital. A few of the girls were able to study, while most of them were either married off or entered a nunnery.⁹³

In the statutes, it is stated that the foundlings brought there should receive milk and food at the hospital's cost, and that girls should receive a dowry of 50 pounds in Sienese money, to enable them to marry. The fresco depicts these episodes faithfully and is thought to be quite realistic. The settings seem specific choices too: the babies are shown in the wet-nurses' house, the room with the school possibly refers to the women's wing of the hospital,⁹⁴ and in the church where the marriage takes place the SS. Annunziata of Siena has been recognized. The rector, shown in the middle of the fresco with a swaddled child he has just taken out of

92 Orlandini 2002: 11-16.

93 Orlandini 2002: 37-38.

94 Siena 1987: 8.

the *pila* (in the foreground, with the hospital's logo) and is handing over to the *sopradonne*, the head nurse, shows features of the real rector Giovanni Buzzichelli.⁹⁵ In the *wet-nurses'* house, women are busy feeding, washing and cradling children, while tending the fire and baking – a charming detail, the cookies in the basket can be identified as *ricciarelli* of almond paste, typically Siennese.⁹⁶

Nowadays, when viewed from the backside, the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala stands out as a sort of citadel within the city of Siena. It is a massive set of buildings, rising high above the crevice. To the right, the girls' chapel sticks out clearly. Through the chapel, the houses of the wet-nurses and other rooms for women within the 'female' wing could be reached. Although the building is very complex, it displays the typical structure of early hospitals, with a series of long narrow halls running parallel and crosswise, lit and ventilated by high windows. The paintings offer a faithful depiction of the complex.

The choice of themes for the frescoes in the Pilgrim's Hall reflects the shift in focus from the fifteenth century onwards, when care for patients and foundlings came to prevail over assistance to pilgrims and the poor. But the hospital continued to provide lodging in the building well into the nineteenth century; only in 1886 did it become destined exclusively for the treatment of the sick. That the 'Ospedale of Santa Maria della Scala' remained in use as a hospital until the 1980s shows how well the building suited this purpose. The paintings too served their original purpose for over five centuries. Only recently has the hospital been transformed into a cultural and museal complex, ensuring access to the paintings.

As a depiction of the education of foundlings the Siena image is unique, but a lot is known about such education from the extensive literature on Italian foundling hospitals, mainly based on preserved regulations. As not only a master had to be hired to teach the foundlings, but also provisions for the pupils had to be bought, schoolbooks and equipment are often mentioned. As an example, the fifteenth-century account books of the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala in San Gimignano contain entries for journeys made to buy, amongst other things, 'libri di scuola per i fanciulli' (schoolbooks for the children).⁹⁷ In San Gimignano's foundling hospital, there were two boys who stayed on for a long time, and their school careers can be followed by the mentioning of books and things bought for them in the *Memoriali* (account books) and the books of arrival and departure.

In 1419 the boys, called Checco and Caterino and about eight years old then, received two silver 'grossi' each to pay the school master. In 1424 the rector of the hospital paid master Meo di Pietro for teaching the boys – apparently the only two of school age – and in the same year when in Florence he bought a 'libro di grammatica, che si chiama Dottrinale', that is the grammar book called *Dottrinale* (by Alexander de Villa Dei) and, at another book store, a book called 'Prospero'. In 1425, on one of his other trips to Florence, he bought a book called 'Isopo' (Aesop's fables) and in 1426 'regole da imparare gramatica' (rules for learning grammar). It is not known how many boys used these books, and if they were taught inside the hospital or went to a school in the city, but it is sure that education was well provided for.⁹⁸

Educating the poorest

Due to the nature of the sources, a lot more is preserved in writing about the schools for the poorest than about the much more common other schools, because the teachers at the 'armenscholen' (schools for the poor) were paid by the city and

95 Orlandini 2002: 46.

96 Orlandini 2002: 54.

97 Sandri 1982: 47.

98 Sandri 1982: 176–178.

therefore their payments appeared in the municipal account books. According to H. de Ridder-Symoens, at least in Flanders, all schoolmasters mentioned in the municipal records were teaching at schools for the poor. For Holland, this seems not to have been the case, as the schoolmasters studied by Ad Tervoort in his master's thesis⁹⁹ were attached to the same schools of which lists with paying pupils are preserved. The names of the masters ended up in the account books because some of the school fees were taken over by the government and because the city controlled the masters.

In the fifteenth century, the municipal account books of Bois-le-Duc list bursaries for 'schamele clerckens' (poor male pupils) that will pay their school fees for them, so they could visit the 'schola in buschis', the Grammar school of Bois-le-Duc.¹⁰⁰ The system was simple, but its implications are wide. As parents had to pay for their offspring's schooling by giving the fee directly to the master, in the cases where the parents could not pay, the city stepped in and remunerated the school fees to the master. A bursary system like this reflects an educational policy of the city, demonstrating that civic authorities were trying to make the school accessible for a broad population and that they were willing to invest in education. Moreover, it shows that those pupils whose parents could not afford the school fee were a minority, and that that minority could somehow be defined.

These bursary systems, which left traces in many municipal account books, were one of the reasons that education became accessible to a large part of the population of the Netherlands in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Of course, it had always been possible to obtain a good education for your children if you had the money. Now, instruction became increasingly attainable for those who would have missed out because of the costs involved. There is also a shift in interference: before, it had been the parents who instigated education, and they had to think it important enough to invest in. Now, the city councils decided that education was desirable, and drowned out the parents' voice and choice. There is no indication that the interference of the government was seen as unwelcome, but it may have strengthened impulses of the parents who had the money to choose other schools for their children than the one 'made obligatory' by the magistrates. That they had to buy off the school fee of that master, in addition to what they were paying to the other, indicates again the importance they attached to their choice of education.

Educating the richest

No costs were spared to supply the children of the rich and mighty with excellent teachers and school material. As most of this education took place inside the home, it is largely outside the scope of this book. But a glimpse into the world of a very rich pupil may place the school life of the poor pupils from the orphanage into perspective.

Everywhere in late-medieval and Renaissance Europe, the rich and mighty saw to the education of their sons and daughters. Although their views on the contents and nature of this education varied widely, they agreed on the importance of passing on skills, knowledge and virtues to the next generation, who had to follow in their footsteps, or even surpass them. Some powerful men and women are particularly known for their efforts in obtaining the best education for their offspring, usually because they did their best to hire famous scholars as teachers or commissioned schoolbooks in the higher spheres of the art world of the time. The scholar and writer Jacob van Maerlant, who was the personal tutor of the young count Floris V,

99 Tervoort 1992.

100 See: Willemsen 2000.

RIGHT PAGE:

ill. 257. *Massimiliano at his lessons, Grammar book, Giovan Pietro Biragi, 1496/1499. Milan, Trivulziana Library, Cod. 2176, f 13v.*
© Saporetti Immagini d'Arte, Florence.

was particularly well known. In fact, many of the preserved books written by Maerlant were used in the education of the count, some of them commissioned by Jacoba van Beieren, his aunt and one of the most powerful women in Holland after the tragic death of Willem II, heir to the Holy Roman Empire. Floris must have valued his education, as he became a proponent of schools in Holland at the turn of the thirteenth century.

In Italy, Federico da Montefeltro managed to appoint Paulus van Middelburg – from Zeeland in the Netherlands, like Maerlant – as teacher of his son Guidobaldo (see § 6.7). Federico was famous for his knowledge and his library, so it is not a surprise that he rated the education of his children highly. He owned many books on grammar and the arts, and although nowadays we look at those as high-class artworks, they must have been used in the lessons of his children.

The Sforza family in Milan too left an impression of how they provided for the education of their heirs in a number of well-produced individual school volumes still preserved in the Biblioteca Trivulziana in Milan. There is a grammar book of Donatus – used in all schools and (as shown here) for private teaching as well – made for Massimiliano Sforza, with the *Disticha Catonis* and the *Institutiones grammaticae* added, two more advanced grammar texts used widely. This grammar was made between 1496 and 1499 and includes a sonnet for Massimiliano at the beginning and a sonnet for his father Ludovico il Moro at the end; it was given to the boy at the age of five or six by his father.¹⁰¹ He would have used it after his other still existing textbook, the *Liber Iesus* that was also called *Libro dell'ABC*. It consists of fourteen pages of text, with an alphabet, the Lord's Prayer, *Ave Maria*, Creed, Invocation of the Cross, *Miserere*, *Salve Regina* (in Latin) and moralizing captions. These are the alphabet and prayers from which everybody learned to read. The book was made for the boy himself, which is stressed by the illustration on page 6, where the meeting of small Massimiliano and his powerful namesake Maximilian, the Holy Roman Emperor – whose own childhood 'mirror' *Der Weißkunig* shows a court lesson taken with other children as well¹⁰² – on July 25th, 1496 is portrayed.¹⁰³ Young Massimiliano would have been well aware of the expectations resting on him and his school results. The same artist who copied Massimiliano's ABC, Giovan Battista de' Lorenzi, produced a grammar book between 1454 and 1460 for Ippolita Maria, sister of Ludovico. Her initials are included on the first page.¹⁰⁴

The grammar made for Massimiliano was decorated by the Sforza 'court illuminator' Giovan Pietro Biragi¹⁰⁵ and includes on folio 13v a depiction of the boy at his lessons (ill. 257). We see him depicted six times, engaged in various activities of which only one is actually schoolwork; the others are merely ways of avoiding it. Centrally placed in the image is the boy wearing a red beret and a yellow jerkin, seated behind a table with a book open in his hands. Opposite the table is his tutor reading from a book as well. He is wearing a poet's laurel wreath and is speaking, indicated both by his pointing hand and his open mouth. The two of them are having cool air fanned over them by a midget servant wearing a two-coloured hose in red and white. Around this image, Massimiliano is shown playing with birds and a dog and even dozing off. These must have been common diversions during tedious study hours, which bring to mind the things Matthäus and Veit Konrad Schwarz claimed they preferred over lessons, like handling small birds (see ill. 151).

However more luxurious the textbooks, the setting, and the toys of these high-class children may be, the contents of the education and the practice of the classes and the spare time in between them does not seem to differ much from those of

101 Milan, Biblioteca Trivulziana, ms 2167, see: Alexander 1994: 13 and fig. 5.

102 Reicke 1971: 70.

103 Milan, Biblioteca Trivulziana, ms 2163.

104 Milan, Biblioteca Trivulziana, ms 786.

105 Alexander 1994: 13.

passiuo: duo: que: preteriti temporis &
futuiri.

Da preteriti ut amatus.

Da futuri ut amandus.



Infìn chel mastro insegna / el conte agara.
Studia & ascolta e uolunteri impara.

lower class pupils. In other words: the material culture of elite schooling is different only in value and execution, but not in the nature of the objects, and on a daily basis a prince would long for time to play and run around in the palace as much as any other school child would check the clock¹⁰⁶ for his time off.

Teaching girls

In many publications, it is taken for granted that schooling was accessible only to males. A number of written sources indicating different possibilities were already quoted in Chapter 1. The references are backed up by iconographical evidence. A class of four girls, being taught by a female teacher, can be seen in a prayer book kept in the British Library, produced in the Southern Netherlands (probably Bruges) around 1445 (ill. 258).¹⁰⁷ In the middle, a girl in a green dress with an open book

ill. 258. *School with girls and mistress holding paddle. Prayer Book, Flemish, c.1450. London, British Library, ms Harley 3828, f 27v.*
© British Library.



¹⁰⁶ The Vellert print showing a school (see ill. 117) features a clock inside the room.

kneels before a female teacher, who is seated to her left, in a high chair. The mistress has taken the hand of the girl in her right hand, and holds a large 'plak' (paddle) with her left, ready to slap the girl's hand with it. In the background, three more girls can be seen, all seated on benches or maybe footstools (note the bent knees shown under the dresses). One of the girls is holding a second opened book. All have rich dresses and hair tied in two knots on the forehead, mirroring fashion in the fifteenth century, in the same style as the teacher's dress and hair. On the floor, a pattern of small tiles is laid, while a larger pattern of wall hangings covers the back wall. One horizontal beam can be seen, maybe indicating a marble wall in the lower zone. Above the teacher's chair, a hornbook (see § 2.1) is hanging: within a pinkish rim, brown letters on a yellow surface have been indicated. Although the two lines are not properly readable – the hornbook measuring 8 x 6 mms in the original! – the first characters of an alphabet can be made out.

This image is part of a small and manageable prayer book (12 x 8 cms), the content of which was compiled for its first user. The depiction of the girls' class is preceded by a calendar, some diagrams and prayers to certain saints, all placed separately with empty pages in between. The picture is on a left-hand page, and is followed by a page with two alphabets, one in red and blue capitals and one in black minuscule letters. After some pages left blank, other prayers follow, the Hours of the Virgin and (from f 64v) a series of illustrations with captions designed to allow the reader to take part in the suffering of Christ. A large part of the text is in Middle Dutch, including the calendar and the 'suffering emblems', but the common prayers and hours are in Latin. The book must have been meant for (or compiled by) someone who used both languages.

According to Kathryn M. Rudy, this prayer book was made for a young girl.¹⁰⁸ This may be the case, but it was suited for others too: it was definitely used by others in its later history. The set of pilgrim badges, once applied to the first page,¹⁰⁹ most likely was not a child's collection, and an interesting 'colophon' mentions among other written 'clues' a later, male owner, Johannes Heesbeen, who asks politely to have the book, when found, returned to him in the city of Bois-le-Duc.¹¹⁰ Rudy states correctly that the alphabet in the book was used for learning to read, and that the explicit captions in the 'suffering' part could be used in the same process. But when the full contents and the bilingualism of the manuscript are considered, it is more likely to be a book for a life of female devotion. It cannot be excluded that it was owned by an adult woman, maybe attached to one of the religious groups that stressed the suffering of Christ, maybe a mistress herself – the pages with the class and the alphabet mirror the practice of both teacher and pupil. That might explain why specifically the teacher's act of punishment is depicted here. This is a common choice of theme from the school life in books for adults, but might appeal more to a teacher than to a pupil.

Within the broader context of this prayer book, page 28r is a primer. It brings to mind the primer made around 1505 by Guido Mazzoni di Modena for princess Claude of France, one of the highlights of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge (ill. 259). The right-hand page at the beginning of the volume shows, within illuminated borders, an alphabet and the beginnings of the prime prayer *Pater noster*. The left-hand page shows the owner of the primer, young Claude, child of King Louis XII of France and Anne of Brittany, who ordered the manuscript for her daughter. Claude, protected by her patron saint, is kneeling in prayer before Saint Anne – the patron saint of her mother Anne – who is teaching her daughter Mary.

107 London, British Library, ms Harley 3828.

108 Rudy 2006; see also her entry (no. 108) on this book in: Eichberger 2005: 267-268.

109 Eight badges, seven circular and one lancet-shaped, were once attached to a right-hand page before the flyleaves and texts; the imprints and the holes of the stitches can be recognized on a left-hand page.

110 F 209v: 'Codex iohannis heesbeen / wiet vint ghevet hem weder om goede wille In die stadt va[n] d[en] bosch.' Interestingly, even this 'colophon' is half in Latin and half in Dutch.

ill. 259. *Primer of Claude of France, French, c.1505. Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, ms 159, f 1v-2r. © Fitzwilliam Museum.*



The books of both girls are close together, while some form of contact is indicated in Mary's outstretched hand. The indication is clear: the young girl is learning from the best. The subject of Anne teaching was chosen more often to deliberately mirror female literacy (see § 4.3), but it may have been considered of specific interest here. Claude, like other high-ranking girls, may well have received individual teaching herself and she would have used her own primer for it.

While the schooling of girls overlapped with that of boys in the usual subjects, there were, of course, specific nuances to female education, including activities mainly practised by women (from needlework to bookkeeping) and 'womanly' virtues and behaviour. These might call for specific instruction, specific manuals, and sometimes for depictions of girls being taught. A French translation of Valerius Maximus holds a depiction of a woman teaching two girls as an illustration of the chapter on 'continence et abstinence', restraint conduct especially taught to females. The scene is set in an empty landscape, where the mistress holds a book and is speaking, while the girls in long elegant dresses and headscarves each read in a book of their own.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, ms fr 290, f 197v.



There were whole manuscripts dedicated to the education of girls specifically, maybe written by a father, but to be used by others too (ill. 260). This is stated in a manuscript in London that starts with:

‘Cy commence le livre que fist le chevaliez (Here starts the book that the knight of the
delatour pour l’enseignement de ses filles.’ tower has made for the education of his daughters).

The knight with the appropriate name ‘of the tower’ is shown sitting in a garden with trees, reading or teaching from a scroll on his knees, to three beautiful girls standing before him. This image on the frontispiece covers the title and is the only depiction in the manuscript.¹¹²

The education of girls was common enough to appear in a margin: between the tendrils in a French book of hours there is a man teaching a girl to read. The master is dressed in a red cloak with fur lining and holds the tendrill, while the girl who is reading from a book in her master’s lap is dressed in green, her hair in braids tied together with a ribbon.¹¹³ It is a very delicate scene, only 2 x 2 cms in the original,

¹¹² London, British Library, ms Royal 19 C.VII, f 1r.

¹¹³ Chantilly, Musée Condé, ms 76, f 29v.

ill. 260. King instructing
four girls, in French
Gouvernement des roys et
princes, fifteenth century.
Brussels, Royal Library,
ms 9554, f 9v. © KBB



and does not seem to have any hidden motives; on the contrary, the book holds more scenes alluding to schooling (see ill. 251) and games and this image may well relate to the real setting in which the owner, a noble lady, was educated herself.

The education of girls is, even more often than that of boys, thought to be only for the elite. But various grammar schools made provisions for separating the sexes, for instance when entering the school, or arrangements within the building or the classroom, which demonstrates that they were accessible to all (see § 1.1). In city regulations we hear of many so-called 'bijscholen' or extra schools meant exclusively for girls – for these, exceptions were made to the rules. The text on the teacher's street sign painted by Holbein (see ill. 115) explicitly states that education is provided there for boys and girls, men and women alike. Moreover, there are descriptions of schooling in written lives of female saints and nuns, like

those of the Sisters of Common Life (see § 1.3). There is a lot of iconographical evidence for the schooling of girls as well, like the depiction of a full classroom with girls on the ground floor and boys upstairs by Dirck Vellert (see ill. 117) and the school scenes from the lives of female saints in stained glass (see ill. 141). In a strict sense, the depictions are no hard evidence of the education of females, but they do prove that that form of schooling was considered normal and in no way out of bounds, whether in the fourteenth or sixteenth century and whether in the Netherlands or Italy.

A literate society

The most interesting question about any system of bursaries as well as about the schooling provided widely for orphans and foundlings, even female, is: why were they doing that? When carried out in third countries, it is often viewed upon as a way of colonization: the imposing of education in one specific language (Latin, or a national language) as a way of suppressing local culture with its own 'literacies'. For instance in Estonia and Lapland, the foundation of schools in villages in the sixteenth century is seen as Swedish, Protestant 'colonization', comparable with the growth of English Grammar schools in Scotland, Ireland and Wales. But even in the efforts of the 'colonizers' in Scandinavia and Great Britain, charity must have played some role. Those in Holland had charity at their core, as they were directed to the own population. There may be a touch of 'civilizing' the poor through education to the manners of the better-situated, but this turned out in favour of the poor. In the sixteenth century, the clothing, accommodation, food and schooling provided for the poorest of the poorest was in some cases actually better than the provisions in common households. This was defended within Christian values as a sort of 'compensation': the children in the orphanages already had to miss out on so much else, like the love of a family.

The only possible explanation for this behaviour lies in this mentality of those who provided for this education: they must have believed that it was worth it and meaningful to teach the children entrusted to them. This sentiment was well expressed by the governor of the Bruges school for poor in 1555:

<p>'Want werde 't niet een groote zake, ja een uutnemende duecht ende caritate, 't verstant van eenen plompen, verduysterden ende quaden kinde te verlichtene, leerne, instrueerne ende onderwy- sen in der wetenthey, ja met duechden ende wel- doen te verchierne'?¹¹⁴</p>	<p>(Is it not a great thing, yes an outstanding virtue and act of charity, to lighten up the mind of a rough, clouded and bad child, to teach, instruct and educate it in knowledge, yes to embellish it with virtues and good deeds?)</p>
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In fact, this is a sentiment found already earlier, in the mirrors for a good life, where it is underlined that you should send children to school, even for simple reasons like the value in everyone being able to read a letter (see § 1.3). The adults caring for children without parents, usually out of some idea of charity, took this advice very seriously, as did the cities on a higher level. If possible, the treatment given to children by their families was granted equally to those who could not afford it, through other channels. They must have believed that education was both a means and a goal, to realize a better life for those who started theirs underprivileged, as well as a way to lift up the whole of society starting 'at the bottom'.

114 Schouteet 1960: 168.

This latter sentiment can be recognized clearly in the changes that education underwent within the context of the Reformation in the Low Countries and Germany. As in Great Britain, schools were ‘cleansed’ of Catholic teachers, replaced by scholars of the ‘right Faith’, and some schoolbooks were replaced, an operation largely made possible by the quick availability of printed textbooks. But unlike elsewhere, in fact, most schools continued to exist, and many teachers carried on with their work. But school attendance rose in the Reformed cities, and much was invested in raising funds for the care and education of orphans; many orphanages in Holland were founded only after the Reformation. As the Protestant Faith focuses on the written word, and independent reading of the scriptures is essential to its practice, encouragement of reading education is not surprising. But there is much more to this development: Reformation education emphasized matters and conduct even more than Catholic education had. And the Counter-Reformation in its turn equally promoted schooling, to literally teach their ideas to a broad population. In the new Dutch and German reality of the second half of the sixteenth century, it was truly a goal to educate society.

EDUCATION AND LITERACY

From c.1300 to c.1600

Even before 1300, Jacob van Maerlant had written in his *Heimelijkheid der Heimelikheden* ('Top secret'), a tract on good government dedicated to count Floris V of Holland:

'In steden dire mogenthede
Mac scolē, ende doe leren mede
die kinder van dinen lande.
Sijn si arrem, vul hem die hande;
Doe hem hovescheit ende ere,
dat elc te williker lere'.¹

(In the cities under your power
Found schools, and let the children
of your country learn.
If they are poor, fill their hands:
Respect and honour them that way,
so each will learn eagerly).

This is literature, and Maerlant disguised his recommendation as a lesson of Aristotle to Alexander, but his advice was nonetheless put into deeds in the centuries following. At the end of the sixteenth century, the Italian traveller Lodovico Guicciardini found a system like Maerlant's ideal working very well in the Low Countries. His praise (see Introduction) sounds as if he were being as positive as possible, but he was basically right.

In Guicciardini's time, there were ample possibilities for the populations of Dutch and Flemish towns to be instructed, and a choice could be made from a range of schools. Basic instruction in reading, writing and Christian behaviour was accessible to all, girls and adults included. To pursue an education, the nearest urban Grammar school was usually the best, and boys – and sometimes girls too – were encouraged to attend it. But side schools offered *curricula* that might be more suitable, and one could also conclude a contract for an apprenticeship, which would include schooling as well. In other words: for every kind of literacy needed, there was an education, and they were all based on a presumed basic instruction to the lion's share of the urban population. To re-paraphrase the Italian visitor, in the Netherlands, 'nearly all – even peasants and countrymen – could at least learn to read and write'.²

Primary education, which as early as the fourteenth century consisted of a dense network of 'small schools', remained largely unchanged through the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. These schools, where reading, writing and other basic skills were taught to both young girls and young boys, were offered by women or masters with limited academic training, usually in a private home or a rented room in a larger building. Not much equipment was needed, apart from writing tablets and

¹ Dated 1266, see: www.literatuurgeschiedenis.nl.

² See: Aristodemo 1994: 266 and 168.

styluses, and maybe an alphabet of some sort; these would be brought by the pupils and taken home again. The children attending these primary schools were still young and would have been brought to school or walked there with siblings or neighbours; they were not yet particularly distinguishable as pupils.

The school system, which was responsible for a heyday for literacy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in the Netherlands, was based on a medieval network of secondary schools closely tied to the church. Even when, from c.1300 onwards, responsibility for education was taken over by government, and former parish or chapter schools were transformed into large grammar schools, school life continued to be associated with the church. Pupils of grammar schools still sung and served in church services, and on festive days performed religious plays and took part in processions, led by their headmaster. Moreover, the pupils of the city school were sometimes called in to perform public service, when a large work force was needed. Thus, the pupils of the official urban 'big school' had various roles in public life. This increased their visibility as a group in society.

Material school culture

More than those attending primary school, the pupils of the secondary schools had their own fashion and attributes. These changed over the centuries. Until c.1500, the pupils depicted in school scenes only stand out because they carry writing equipment hanging from their belts or because they hold books or writing tablets in their hands. Their clothing, roughly consisting of shirt, tunic and belt, hose and shoes, and cloak and hat when outside, does not differ from anything worn by other children and youngsters at the time. This changes slowly from the middle of the fifteenth century, when boys from seven years on start wearing trousers and jerkins, thus creating an age division in dress, that coincided with the age division between primary and secondary school. School boys are depicted wearing short cloaks over short trousers from c.1500 onwards (ill. 262). Another piece of fashion that quickly became omnipresent as part of the pupil's outfit is the beret, and it is a striking constant not only throughout Europe in the sixteenth century but also throughout the centuries following. Berets can be seen in depictions and portraits of schoolboys from Italy, France, Germany, Great Britain, Belgium and Holland (ill. 261). They are bought in large quantities for the pupils of schools for the poor and were sold both new and second-hand by the peddlers of Paris and Rome. The fact that most secondary schools were boarding schools increased the uniformity of the schoolboys' clothing and shoes, as these were largely supplied by the schools. The 'schoolboys' look' must have reinforced itself this way.

From the end of the fifteenth century, the availability of printing and paper changed the equipment used in schools, as education became much more written. Until at least c.1450, the writing equipment depicted as worn by pupils consists of a rectangular case, the kind that holds a wax tablet book, and an elongated case that could hold styluses. The double writing case typically carried by schoolboys of the sixteenth century clearly includes an inkwell on one end, which means that the elongated case on the other end would have held quills or pens, and that they were writing in ink at school. Moreover, these writing cases are increasingly seen in the company of a schoolbasket or schoolbag, in which other, larger school equipment like books could be carried. The bag over the shoulder, together with short cloak and flat beret, would become and stay the characteristic denominators of the outfit of a schoolboy (ill. 263).



ill. 261. Jan van Scorel, Portrait of a schoolboy, 1531. Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, inv.no. OK 1797. © BVB.

ill. 262. Self-portrait of a schoolboy from the concealed find at Alpirsbach. Photo taken from: Mönche und Scholaren 1995: 46.



ill. 263. Advertisement for LU-biscuits 'Le petit écolier' with cloak, hat and basket. Firmin Bouisset, 1897. Photo taken from postcard.

The change in practice towards more individual reading and writing in class caused not only a change in the types but also a substantial increase in the numbers of objects used in school. That also means that more objects got lost and were thrown away in a school context. The increased peculiarity of pupils' dress and attributes provides for objects and fragments that can be more readily recognized when found. Finally, as stated above, most schools of the sixteenth century were separate, special buildings. These are the main reasons why the excavated assemblages of school finds, from school sites, date largely from the sixteenth century (Alpirsbach, Coventry, Gorinchem, Groningen, and Leiden). In these, a considerable number of items either lost or thrown away, luckily coincided with the possibilities to identify both the site and the objects as school-related.

The school in Liège, dated to the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth century, had a fixed place in the cathedral complex there, which made it possible to identify the site within the excavated plan. The objects found here that can be connected with writing are mostly the nine styluses, which fit well into the impression given by depictions of school from these two centuries, that include mostly manuscript books, wooden writing tablets and metal styluses. But the use of styluses was not limited to pupils and a lot of writing for other purposes was done in the cathedral complex. It is the combination of writing implements with a number of playthings found in the same contexts that strengthen the impression that it is indeed the life of pupils we are reconstructing.

The school in Lübeck, dated c.1370, was identified because a substantial number of writing implements, especially wax tablets, found in a drain close to the church, the known location of a school, was accompanied by two 'plakken' (paddles) – the oldest ever excavated. As use of the paddle for corporal punishment is only known to be connected to teachers, this object indicated the presence of a teacher and was the final touch to the overall impression from the nature of the finds and the location that an educational site had been found. It is possible that this school was not a separate building, but part of the church. From written sources, it is known that the school on this location was a side school, teaching arithmetic and accounting, but the finds are similar to those of grammar schools.

In Zwolle, the excavations of a 'schoolish' assemblage dated to the first half of the fifteenth century yielded not the site of a school but of a boarding house known from written sources. Yet, as this was a 'society of pupils', the assemblage is recognizable as school-related, probably more so than a school site of this period. Although many of the finds are only indicative for a large household, and there are just a few items for writing, the identification of the location was confirmed by peripheral evidence, like the presence of a shaving knife, indicating a certain age and sex for someone in the house, and an unusually large number of pisspots, that could be linked to the practice known from written school orders to place pisspots in dormitories in winter, so children did not have to walk too far in the cold if they had to pee at night.

In these examples of Liège, Lübeck and Zwolle, even if not so many exclusive school implements were used, the combination of sources still made the identification of a school-related site possible. The impression of life at school given by these sites was coherent with the picture emerging from descriptions and depictions, although in some cases the archaeological finds gave unique details: no allusion to shaving is made in any of the school orders or school scenes I know – it is logical that boys would enter puberty when they were in grammar school, but it was never mentioned before this practical remainder was found in Zwolle.

The five sixteenth-century school sites all held relatively more 'schoolish objects' than the three earlier ones. There are many similarities in what was found in these buildings, resulting in a remarkably coherent image of what kind of things should be considered 'school objects'. First, there are, of course, writing and reading materials, in this century merely inkwells, pens, knives, and the remains of paper and books, plus jetons for counting. Secondly, there are items for eating dinner, like bowls and spoons. Thirdly, come items of dress, mostly shoes, belts and metal accessories, with the rare lost shirt, sock or beret in between. Fourthly and last, there are always toys and playthings: spinning tops, knucklebones, marbles, gaming pieces, even blowpipes and game boards. These categories of schoolish finds indicate, on the one hand, that schoolboys were dressed in a certain way, and, on the other, that their schooldays were divided between lessons, meals, and games.

The finds correspond well with the evidence from contemporary images and texts. The combination showed that the details of depictions are relatively accurate and allowed us to cautiously use those works of art as sources for the cases where the comparable objects have *not* been preserved or when considering aspects like the colours of objects and clothes, that are seldomly indicated by the finds.

Literacy

As was expected, the study of the material culture could not rival the exact information provided by statistics extracted from archival documents on the level of literacy and accessibility of education. However, it was able to supplement those statistics, as the material culture reflects an omnipresent awareness of the



ill. 264. *St. Louis at school, surrounded by classmates. Photo taken from: Alexandre-Bidon 2000: 16.*

RIGHT PAGE:

ill. 265. *Closing the school door behind you, in the Trachtenbuch of Matthäus Schwarz. Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, ms H.27 no. 67a.*
© HAUM.

importance of education for all kinds of children, both in the positive image of schools and writing in art and by the material provisions made to enable children to go to school, attend class, and do their schoolwork.

The iconographical themes in which scenes of education occur most frequently, and the way they were treated there, indicate that education was generally thought of as a good thing and as a fixed episode in life, and that it was in most cases found in a school outside the home. Instruction in reading and writing is an inextricable part of the image handed down of the life of those whose example we should follow: wise men, kings (ill. 264), saints, and the Virgin Mary and the Christ Child. According to the images provided by late-medieval and Renaissance art of their lives, they all went to school, were taught by a master, in the company of school mates. For this, they were equipped with their own school material: ABC-boards, writing tablets, styluses, books, pens, writing cases, and school bags to carry it all.

Grammar, the basics of the medieval school system, is usually personified as a kind mistress, who could combine gently leading the hands and minds of pupils in writing and learning with disciplining them firmly but justly. The images that depict school more generally, either as a form of 'genre' or as a parody, often show this combination of active teaching and active punishment as well. Apparently, one could not exist without the other. The schoolmaster's appearance adds to this impression: he has the dress of a scholar, but the raised chair of a teacher, and his hands hold both book and rod. When schooling was made fun of, either in word or in image, the target is not the use of education, but rather the difficult circumstances in which it had to take place: the large number of pupils in one room, the lack of school material, unhygienic situations in school, underqualified and underpaid teachers, etc. – in other words: the crowd, the noises, the smells... These things made it recognizably difficult to teach boys and girls, although that in itself was seen as a necessity, not only for the children themselves, but for the whole of society.

School life

In the centuries between 1300 and 1600 in urban surroundings, school had become a way of life indeed. Lessons as a rule took place in fixed arrangements – classrooms – in either part of an ecclesiastical complex or in separate buildings. 'School' was thought of more and more as a building rather than a group of pupils with a teacher, and in texts and images from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the 'school' is a defined building, next or close to a church, with a school door that you could reach on your first day at school, or close behind you on your last (ill. 265). Boys (and to a lesser extent girls) from the city would arrive at school in the morning, lingering around in bunches in the schoolyard, spinning tops, running and jumping around, sometimes embroiled in a fight. Pupils from out of town lived together, often in the school or in a house close to it, and formed a sort of school society 24 hours a day. They had breakfast together, made their beds, did their homework, celebrated festivities. They wrote their names on the walls of the dormitories, two by two, with the date: 'friends forever'. They walked in the procession together, shoes shined, hair combed, hands folded, and skipped school together, messing up their clothes, nagging passers-by, pinching the best apples from your garden. When you walked through the city centre, the schoolchildren were impossible to ignore.

10.
 1510 im summerkait mich aber me
 vatter diser gestalt: da was ich in
 primo paxtem zu sant morizen
 laut der weel satiff am 10 kait
 7. capite noz in meynem sym
 geere #



13 jar und 8 ey 4 monet

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