

2014

Alain de Lille's Shameful, Pleasure-Seeking Hermaphrodites: Reconsidering Plaintiff of Nature's Anti-Sodomitic Stance

Laura Marie Brzyski
Lehigh University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://preserve.lehigh.edu/etd>



Part of the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Brzyski, Laura Marie, "Alain de Lille's Shameful, Pleasure-Seeking Hermaphrodites: Reconsidering Plaintiff of Nature's Anti-Sodomitic Stance" (2014). *Theses and Dissertations*. Paper 1442.

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Lehigh Preserve. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Lehigh Preserve. For more information, please contact preserve@lehigh.edu.

Alain de Lille's Shameful, Pleasure-Seeking Hermaphrodites: Reconsidering *Plaint of Nature's* Anti-Sodomitic Stance

by

Laura Marie Brzyski

A Thesis

Presented to the Graduate and Research Committee

of Lehigh University

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in

English

Lehigh University

May 2014

© Copyright 2014
Laura Marie Brzyski

Thesis is accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts in English.

Alain de Lille's Shameful, Pleasure-Seeking Hermaphrodites: Reconsidering *Plaint of Nature's* Anti-Sodomitic Stance
by Laura Marie Brzyski

Date Approved

Thesis Advisor: Suzanne M. Edwards

Department Chair: Scott Paul Gordon

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project emerged from Dr. Suzanne Edward's Fall 2013 seminar Sex, Gender, and Sexuality in the Middle Ages—the very first course of my graduate career. I would like to thank Suzanne, with my whole heart, who helped nurture this paper from its conception to present. She, in particular, helped me discover the confidence I needed to not only carry out this endeavor, but to recognize and embrace the shame and pleasure that comes with such an ambitious project. I would also like to thank the Lehigh University English department as a whole—comprised of not only intellectual, but supportive faculty and colleagues. The discourse community we establish and maintain allowed me to mature as both a writer and a scholar, and for that, I am truly grateful. And last, but never least, my parents, who have provided constant support and encouragement, especially during my graduate studies. Thank you for listening to every paper, letting me make our living room my work space, and allowing me to be every version of myself.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	1
I. Introduction	2
II. Witnessing, Inhabiting, and Producing Shame	4
III. Alain's Hermaphrodites and an Unstable Natura	12
IV. A Return to Shameful Pleasure/Pleasurable Shame	20
V. Contemporary Queer Interest in the Ethics of Shame	27
Works Cited	31
<i>Vita</i>	32

ABSTRACT

This paper reads the insistence on shame in Alain de Lille's *Plaint of Nature* in light of the stringent regulation of deviant sexuality occurring in the twelfth century, mainly the Third Lateran Council of 1179 and the invention of sodomy as a category. Because of this juridical prohibition, much criticism of *Plaint of Nature* has suggested that Alain forwards an anti-sodomitic stance, especially because Alain himself participated in the Third Lateran Council. This paper argues that Alain is actually not interested in regulating acts *contra naturam*, but interested in showing that regulatory impulse is an ethical failure in so far as it seeks to cleanse normative sexuality of its shame. Alain's emphasis on the dreamer's, Lady Natura's, and the text's hermaphroditism reminds us that shame is constitutive of sexuality in all its forms, and that shame itself can be ethically productive.

I. Introduction

Modeled after Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, Alain de Lille's later twelfth-century dream vision text, *De planctu naturae*, or *Plaint of Nature*, relates the encounter between the unnamed narrator (the dreamer) and the personification of Nature (Lady Natura). The *Plaint* opens with the dreamer's lament, which gives way to the vision, or dream, of Lady Natura. Through their encounter, and thus, through the dream of the narrator, the fundamental "complaint" of Nature is revealed: the moral degeneration of society due to sodomitic practices. In other words, Lady Natura informs the dreamer that man has defiled himself from God through the sin of "unnatural" desire, explaining this sexual perversion in terms of grammatical perversion. At her own request, Nature calls for Genius, the priest-figure, to excommunicate sinners from the realm of nature, and thus, the dream concludes. The *Plaint's* plot and content has prompted much criticism to focus on Alain's investigation of "deviant" sexuality. Alain's preoccupation with sodomy in his poetic dream vision was not unique in twelfth-century religious culture. Indeed, the Third Lateran Council of 1179, in which Alain participated, regulated acts *contra naturam* with new force. This juridical prohibition of sodomy was itself part of what Mark Jordan has argued advanced the invention of "sodomy" as a category in the twelfth century.¹

These readings have offered interesting and insightful entrances into Alain's text, but none has so far connected the *Plaint's* interest in sexuality to its focus on shame, as the affect that not only prompts the formulation of the dream vision, but that is unlocked in the readers as well. In this essay, I consider how *Plaint of Nature's* representation of

¹ See, for example, Larry Scanlon's "Speaking the Unspeakable: Sexual Regulation and the Priesthood of Genius," as well as Mark Jordan's *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology*.

sexuality constitutes shame itself. This intersection between sexuality and shame, I believe, reframes customary criticism of the text's regulation of sexuality. First, it shows how missing the ethics of shame limits understanding the poem as something other than merely a restrictive regulation of sexuality. In addition, it reveals how such regulation always produces more failure, and why that failure—experienced as shame—is ethically productive. I explore why focusing solely on Alain's heaping shame on sodomites actually misses the extent to which even "upright" men are shamed in *Plaint of Nature*. Thus, I argue that *Plaint of Nature* is a critical, even ashamed, reflection on stringent regulatory efforts of the Third Lateran Council.

Additionally, I motivate my reading of *Plaint of Nature* overall as an effort to understand what puzzles most readers about it: namely, its extraordinary grammatical, poetic, and generic difficulty. As I have mentioned, criticism has viewed Alain's text as forwarding an anti-sodomitic stance because it links sexual perversion with grammatical perversion. However, the text not only emphasizes, but relies on hermaphroditism. In many instances, the syntax folds back on itself. Even the *Plaint* in its entirety goes back and forth between poetry and prose. The *Plaint*, in other words, is self-reflexive at its core. The text's unstable syntax and formality makes it difficult for readers to make sense of the language and the content, leaving us feeling shame ourselves. In other words, at times, this text is so difficult and frustrating to read because it doubles back on itself. To read it is to be inadequate to the task—to read it is to be shamed. Thus, if shame is what drives the poem and its ethics, we find that Alain's text is not actually interested in condemning or regulating acts *contra naturam*. Rather, it codes all sexuality as queerly hybrid, advocating an ethics of productive, shared shame.

Finally, I frame Alain's interest in shame and sexuality in a wide range of thinkers—from Augustine (who I see as informing Alain's text) to contemporary queer theorists, including Michael Warner and Leo Bersani. I do so to not only help situate my reading of Alain's representation of shamed sexuality, but to argue that there is more continuity between Christian accounts and modern-day queer accounts of shame, sexuality, and ethics than we have often realized. In other words, I aim to examine shame's historical, and particularly literary, trajectory, one that has often gone unnoticed. Seeing this trajectory is important because it serves to remind that even "normative" sexuality is also subject to perversions. Ultimately, I view *Plaint of Nature* as an allegorical, "ethically"-grounded dream vision that causes the dreamer *and* the reader to not only self-examine, but reconsider interpersonal relations in affective ways—pleasurable shame and shameful pleasure.

II. Witnessing, Inhabiting, and Producing Shame

Augustine's *City of God* provides the fundamental backdrop of the *Plaint's* associating shame and sexuality. I see Augustine as an important context for Alain for two reasons. First, Augustine's theory of sexuality was broadly influential in medieval Christianity. Many readers, including the Church cleric and lay, would have been familiar with Augustine's accounts. Alain himself was a priest, and thus, would have been well-versed in the theories of this Church doctor. Second, Augustine's theory of sexuality highlights how sexuality is a vector of shame itself, while simultaneously emphasizing the import of pleasure within this sense of shame—much like Alain does in the *Plaint*. In *City of God* specifically, Augustine exposes how shame is constitutive of sexuality, and, in dramatic parallel, man's fallenness from unity with the divine. For Augustine, shame is

postlapsarian. It is the affect that emerged after Adam and Eve's Fall from God.

Augustine notes that it is only "after they [Adam and Eve] violated God's command by open transgression...the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked [and ashamed]" (XIV.xvii). Here, Augustine suggests that "proper" ethical relations are centered on man's relationship with the divine. To live uprightly, man must live according to God, because "when man lives according to man, not according to God, he is like the devil...because the source of man's happiness lies only in God, whom he abandons when he sins" (XIV.iv). A breach between man and God not only yields "fallenness," but shame. Yet, for Augustine, shame itself accompanies lust, and is the "just punishment" for man's disobedience or fall from God. He cites Adam and Eve's shame, which specifically stems from their 'lustful members' rebelling against their will, noting:

Justly is shame very specially connected with this lust; justly, too, these members themselves, being moved and restrained not at our will, but by a certain independent autocracy, so to speak, are called "shameful." Their condition was different before sin. For as it is written, "They were naked and were not ashamed," Genesis 2:25 — not that their nakedness was unknown to them, but because nakedness was not yet shameful, because not yet did lust move those members without the will's consent; not yet did the flesh by its disobedience testify against the disobedience of man (XIV. xvii).

Thus, Augustine understands shame as the result of Adam and Eve's unrestrained, lustful members of the flesh—members that are moved by lust "without the will's consent."

Here, it is not only a discrepancy between God's wishes and man's (fleshly) desires, but the rebellion of man's body and will. In other words, Augustine claims that fallenness also has to do with the lack of "will's consent." This reveals that man's bodily rebellion against his own will is a miniature version of his will's rebellion against the divine. This dual-natured rebellion, as Augustine views it, is the structure of shame. In other words, self-difference is an affective correlate to man's difference from God. Despite strict prohibitions from the divine, the "lustful" members of man's body may be moved without the will's consent because the flesh itself may be uncontrollable. Thus, shame ensues. The theological precepts in *City of God* find an important analogue in Augustine's autobiographical *Confessions*, where Augustine expresses his own push and pull between shame and pleasure. In his *Confessions*, Augustine reveals the gnawing at his own will—a tension between flesh and will that he himself cannot resolve, even despite prayers to God. He wishes to free himself from his habit which oppresses him, yet begs this liberation to be delayed, claiming, "Grant me chastity and continence, but not yet" (VIII.vii.17). And even after he undergoes his conversion, he notes the longing or desire never fully goes away, particularly in his memory/sleeping state (X.xxx.41). Considering these moments from both *City of God* and *Confessions*, we can understand that an Augustinian understanding of shame and ethics has to do with the disrupted relationship between man and God due to the uncontrollability of the flesh. For Augustine, fallenness is punishable by a "justified" sense of shame.

Alain's ethics is similarly structured around acts *contra naturam*, a term that encompasses a wide range of possibilities, but that presents sexual acts, specifically sodomy, as a signal example. During the Middle Ages, the term 'sodomy' was being

invented. In *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology*, Mark D. Jordan claims that medieval authors, specifically those of the early twelfth century, attempted to create a working definition of ‘sodomy’ by examining past texts. As Jordan notes, however, the problem with this kind of process toward a concrete definition was the murkiness of the sources. For example, the Biblical story of Sodom never explicitly associates the sin of the Sodomites with same-sex copulation. According to Jordan, “there is explicit scriptural evidence that the sin of the Sodomites was some combination of arrogance and ingratitude” (32). Thus, despite the absence of Scriptural evidence, many medieval writers seemed to infer a connection between the ‘sin’ of the Sodomites and perverse sex, especially from St. Augustine’s reading of the Old Testament in his *Confessions*, claiming that their sin was a “violent eruption of disordered desire itself” (35).² Working from former texts such as Augustine’s, some medieval writers characterized *sodomia* by some sort of ‘deviant,’ ‘unnatural’ sex. In Alain’s text, ‘sodomy’ has much to do with same-sex practices, mainly male-male; however, it also has to do with gender oscillation. In the opening metre, the dreamer laments sodomitic practices, noting, “The active sex shudders in disgrace as it sees itself degenerate into the passive sex. A man turned woman blackens the fair name of his sex” (67-68). Inherent in the dreamer’s complaint of sexual acts that are *contra naturam* is a fundamental complaint of gender disruption. It is not only that the sexual act occurs between two men, but that one inhabits the space of passivity, a space traditionally considered to be “womanish.” As I will explicate, Alain’s conceptualizing ‘sodomy’ as extending into the realm of gender pushes against criticism that has mainly focused on Alain’s interest in sexuality. Additionally, it reveals how

² For a more in-depth examination of varying analyses of the Biblical story of Sodom, consult the section titled “Misreading Sodom” in Jordan’s second chapter (30-37).

‘sodomy’ as a term was not just confined to sex practices. For Alain, gender issues are also implicated in his conception of ‘sodomy.’

Considering the import of acts *contra naturam*, we see how sexuality in Alain’s text, just as in Augustine’s, is a push and pull between shame and pleasure. To start, shame complicates the individual’s ability to traverse acts or behaviors that were once characterized by pleasure, or rather, a familiar/identifiable pleasure. In other words, similar to its depiction in *City of God*, shame, in the *Plaint*, is produced from feeling ashamed over something that, at one time, provided pleasure. If we examine the aforementioned part of the dreamer’s lament, we notice how shame is characterized by loss. To reiterate, the dreamer notes, “The active sex shudders in disgrace as it sees itself degenerate into the passive sex” (67-68). For the phrase “shudders in disgrace,” the Latin is “se turpiter horret.” Although Sheridan translates “turpiter” as disgrace, it also translates as deep shame. Shame, in short, drives the text’s main complaint; it is the affective form that engenders the *Plaint*. This response—that of shuddering *shamefully*—is self-reflexive in that the active sex feels and experiences a sense of shame over its own “degeneration.” In other words, the active sex hadn’t viewed itself as degenerative or disgraceful before this degeneration; therefore, Alain describes a shift from pleasure to shame. The active sex had taken delight in the acts and behaviors it once deemed familiar and enjoyable, but no longer does due to its witnessing these become sources of shame. The active sex’s shame, however, is produced not only from witnessing its own degeneration, but rather from the fact that witnessing is the extent of the active sex’s relationship to that degeneration. In other words, the active sex “sees” and despises its own degeneration, but also is powerless to stop it. This degeneration is uncontrollable; it

is outside the confines of the will's consent. Here, we are reminded of Augustine. As we saw in *Confessions*, Augustine felt powerless to stop his lustful members from rebelling against his will. Although he considered himself shackled to this uncontrollable habit, he still recognized its pleasure, claiming, "Grant me chastity and continence, but not yet." Thus, much like the Augustinian view, shame in Alain's text resides in this gap between a perception of degeneracy that accompanies pleasure. Essentially, then, the degeneration of the active sex into the passive sex is characterized by shame because such degeneration produced pleasure *and* was uncontrollable, thus leaving the active sex powerless and ashamed.

Interestingly, shame motivates poetic production, making it the salient feature of Alain's representation of sexuality. The dreamer cultivates this poetic project because of an affective experience, making clear that "The Muse implores, grief itself orders, Nature begs with tears I give them the gift of a mournful ditty" (67). To put aside Nature's role in prompting this poem for a moment, I would like to focus on the affective piece here. It is *grief* which orders the dreamer to produce a "mournful ditty." As David J. Fine notes, the dreamer cultivates this poetic project out of affective experience: "[...] this mournful emotion leads the dreamer to poetry. Affect begets poetics" (18). But, on my reading, more than just grief prompts the dreamer to engage in this poetic project; there is also shame. When the text opens, the dreamer reveals his own affective response to the degeneration of mankind, noting, "I turn from laughter to tears, from joy to grief, from merriment to lament, from jests to wailing" (67). Here, the dreamer is moved to poetry not simply through the lament and grief where he arrives, but also through the rapid alternation between pleasure and despair. It is shame, born out of the rapid shifts between

pleasure and lament, which compels the dreamer to produce. Because of this, I believe the dreamer is part of the group he is essentially condemning: sodomites. To be clearer, the dreamer has obviously shifted from a state of ‘merriment’ to one of ‘lament.’ Although we are not aware of the precise ‘thing’ that has brought him laughter and joy, we do know that he has ceased taking pleasure in it. This is precisely the same experience the active sex undergoes as it “sees itself degenerate.” And, because Alain claims that sodomitic practices involve this degeneration in terms of sexuality and gender. By placing the dreamer’s comment regarding the active sex’s disgrace alongside his own grief-stricken opening confession, we see how the dreamer’s identity collapses into that of the active sex, or more specifically, the sodomite. In other words, the dreamer, in lamenting his own loss of pleasure, articulates the same experience of shame as the sodomite.

The stakes of proposing that the dreamer views himself as a sodomite are radical if we consider Alain’s position. Just as the dreamer is moved to poetic production through alternations between pleasure and grief, Alain creates the actual text itself. As a priest, Alain was chaste, so his potential self-identification as a sodomite in the text is a remarkable association with a group within the church that Alain participated, in the Third Lateran Council, in condemning anew. As Larry Scanlon argues, the movement of Alain’s narrative is “not from pleasure to renunciation [of homoeroticism], but indeed from one sort of pleasure to another...the pleasure of power” (220). Here, Scanlon claims that there is pleasure in condemnation itself; however, I believe that is potentially getting reframed here. If Alain, just like the dreamer, is implicated in pleasure, he is simultaneously seared with shame. As I have already suggested, the coincidence between

pleasure and disgust is constitutive of shame, not merely for Alain, but in a Christian theological tradition. The collapse of the dreamer and the sodomite suggests that Alain is not actually focused on the strict regulation of sexuality *contra naturam*. Rather, my reading argues that the poem's aesthetics are a part of understanding its ethical reflection on the Church's increasingly stringent regulatory practices. Thus, *Plaint of Nature* ashamedly reflects on endeavors, like the Third Lateran Council, to standardize acts *con naturam* and repress those considered *contra naturam*.

Further, the dreamer's shamed response to Lady Natura's grief supports the idea that shame drives the *Plaint's* poetry and its ethics. The dreamer witnesses his source of pleasure become a site of shame because Nature herself deems it as such. For example, as the dreamer continues his opening lament, he notes how Nature herself has responded with grief before he himself has: "[...] Nature begs that with tears I give them the gift of a mournful ditty" (67). By making explicit her own sorrowful affect, Nature stimulates the dreamer's affective response. More specifically, it is only because Nature has revealed her own grief and disapproval that the dreamer interprets his former source of pleasure as now a source of shame. For instance, the dreamer notes how "Nature weeps," which anticipates his own "tears" and "wailing." It seems that without Nature's mourning, the dreamer would not mourn, nor would he experience shame. If Nature had not explicitly condemned the active sex's practices, the active sex, and thus the dreamer, would not perceive their pleasure as shameful. If it sounds as though this is an example of social stigmatizing, in which Lady Natura shames the dreamer for his pleasure, it is worth bearing in mind that Natura is—quite explicitly—a manifestation of the dreamer's own sensory perception of the created world. As Kathryn Lynch notes in *The High Medieval*

Dream Vision: Poetry, Philosophy and Literary Form, the dream vision genre contains allegorical characters that function as “reflections of the Dreamer’s evolving consciousness.” Natura is one of these imaginative projections. According to Lynch, Natura is “related both to the created world over which she is a goddess and also to the mode of knowing proper to assist an individual in knowing himself through that world” (17). This is important to bear in mind because it means that the dreamer is not simply responding to shame, but mentally, imaginatively residing in it. We must remember that this dream vision is indeed just that: a dream. Thus, Lady Natura is inscribed in human consciousness. It is because of Lady Natura—the dreamer’s own Nature—that the dreamer creates. Nature’s grief is essentially the dreamer’s own affective response of shame, and thus, the dream itself comes into fruition. Essentially, then, the entire dream vision is not only a response to shame, but a performance or inhabitation of it.

III. Alain’s Hermaphrodites and an Unstable Natura

Affect, specifically shame, fundamentally begets the dreamer’s poetic project, and thus the dream vision itself. But I am also struck by Alain’s interest in that which is “queer.” I believe the modern term “queer” is an appropriate analogue to acts *contra naturam* in the Middle Ages because the “natural” has been sustained as an idealized, normative standard for human behavior. It is this “queer” sexuality that proves to be a vector of shame. As I have mentioned, most criticism has been focused on sexuality in the poem, citing historical moments and movements relating to “deviant” sexualities. For instance, Larry Scanlon argues that *Plaint of Nature* was conceived on the brink of the Third Lateran Council, which served as the “first fully institutional, comprehensive sanction of the same-sex practice,” thus, legally repressing homoerotic sexuality (218).

Scanlon argues that Alain, who attended the Council, was quite self-conscious and even deliberative in his homophobia—evidence being the *Plaint*. Thus, this focus on same-sex practice had much to do with the “invention” of sodomy because it collapsed *sodomia* with “unnatural” sex practices, as Mark Jordan notes.

But it is more than just sodomy that Alain grapples with in *Plaint of Nature*. Criticism that has been focused on sexuality has not attended in depth to Alain’s related interest in gender. Yet, Alain is as deeply interested and engaged in gender as he is in sexuality; thus, I treat Alain as a theorist of sexual and gender poetics. More specifically, I argue that the *Plaint of Nature* codes *all sexuality* as sodomitic because it is also hermaphroditic. In the *Plaint*, Alain collapses the identities of the sodomite and the hermaphrodite. In other words, hermaphroditism is part of the sodomite’s very identity. For example, inherent in the dreamer’s opening lament of shame is a complaint against “queer” sexual acts and gender disruption. As we have seen, the dreamer bewails, “The active sex shudders in disgrace as it sees itself degenerate into the passive sex.” This, as I have noted, has to do with the active sex’s experience of shame—an experience characterized by a loss of pleasurable power. However, the dreamer goes further, lamenting, “A man turned woman blackens the fair name of his sex. The witchcraft of Venus turns him into a hermaphrodite” (68). Alain merges the sodomitic identity with the hermaphroditic identity because the former, in seeking to lie with the same sex, essentially oscillates between genders. For Alain, the hermaphrodite becomes characteristic of the sodomite’s identity. Inherent in this same-sex copulation is gender flexibility. As the lament suggests, a man turns not into a woman, but womanish. Thus, even though fundamentally a man anatomically, s/he is also womanish in terms of

gender. The hermaphrodite, then, is the living embodiment of the combination of genders—a hybrid figure in opposition to the natural order. In medieval medical literature, sexual and gender hybridity was seen as against the “natural” because any aspect of male or female that did not distinguish him/her from the opposite gender was viewed as unnatural, or *contra naturam*. In *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, and Culture*, Joan Cadden highlights this, noting, “Differences between males and females in general and between men and women in particular were, according to medieval opinion, natural...The central features distinguishing females and males were, in short, part of their natures and part of Nature” (188-89). The physiological differences between men and woman were viewed as being inextricable from both their identities as human beings and the understanding of the characteristics of nature. Thus, anything that deviated from this was seen as breaching the “natural order.”

If we move even further into the dreamer’s opening lament, we discover that Alain’s hermaphrodite is not a hybrid strictly in the sex and gender senses; s/he is also as such because of grammatical perversions. Alain understands the relationship between sex, sexuality, and gender, between anatomy, acts, and identity, and between sodomy and hermaphroditism, *grammatically*. The leap to grammar is the next step we as readers need to take because, as I have already suggested, the *Plaint*’s aesthetics are a part of understanding its ethical reflections on regulatory efforts of “queer” sexuality. Grammar is a component of the text’s aesthetics, and thus, is important to Alain’s project in that he relies on it in order to explicate hermaphroditism. Thinking and explicating in the languages of sex and grammar, Alain dismantles the rules of Latin grammar by making a claim for duality in terms of gender and grammar. As Cadden explains:

Latin grammar, the basis of his polemic, has three fully functioning genders – masculine, feminine, and neuter – and Alan even entertained briefly the idea of placing nonreproductive males (sodomites, who are effectively sterile, and eunuchs) within the domain of the third. Rather than undermine the rules of sex and their implications for gender, however, Alan chose to dismantle the rules of grammar by declaring that nature and grammar have just two genders and that neuter is a different type of form, a negative and confused category (225).

Hence, Alain explicates his understanding of the relationship between sexual acts and sexual anatomy via linking sexual perversion to grammatical perversion. For instance, the aforementioned opening lament of the dreamer establishes the hermaphrodite as not only a sexually perverse being, but also a gender deviant. As the dreamer complains, “He is subject and predicate: one and the same term is given a double application. Man here extends too far the laws of grammar. Becoming a barbarian in grammar, he disclaims the manhood given him by nature” (68). Here, gender fluidity is not only grounded in “proper” sexual acts, but has seamlessly disturbed appropriate syntax. According to the dreamer, the typical, or “natural”, role of the male, particularly in copulation, is active and initiatory, characteristic of the role of the subject in a sentence. On the other hand, the female’s role is one of passivity and receptivity, much like a sentence’s predicate, which receives the action from the subject. What turns man into a hermaphrodite is the access, availability, and engagement in receptivity. In other words, what is “barbaric” is that a receptive male automatically becomes a hermaphrodite, even if he has normative genitalia. Thus, the dreamer condemns the mutability of gender because it abuses both

‘natural,’ or anatomical, gender identity and proper grammar. The ability to switch between masculine and feminine in the realm of gender, sexual acts, and grammar serves as the antithesis to the natural (i.e. is *contra naturam*) because it does not fit the established binaristic confines (masculine/feminine). The hermaphrodite, a prototype of defect, evidently violates these confines.

Lady Natura’s instructions to Venus likewise also foreground the link between sexual and grammatical perversions. God gives Nature the task of hammering out the coinage of creatures on the appropriate anvils—a task that Nature eventually delegates to Venus. Lady Natura discusses grammatical rules as they relate to her instructions to Venus: “[...] I gave instructions that...she [Venus] should not...tolerate a situation where the active type, by appropriating an additional meaning, goes over to the passive or the passive, laying aside its proper character, returns to the active or where a verb with a passive ending retains an active meaning and adopts the rules of deponents” (158-59). Here, Alain is trying to rework Latin grammar in order with Nature. In other words, he uses his own binaristic conception of Latin grammar to forward an argument against the oscillation between gender identities and sexual acts. Essentially, Alain seems to advocate maintaining fixed roles via the explication of active and passive verbs—that the two have their own functions and cannot, nor should not, attempt to adopt that of the other.

So it seems. Alain remains bound to a figure who is vulnerable to hermaphroditic perversions. In *Plaint of Nature*, Nature herself is not held stable. She, too, is implicated in the text’s main “complaint.” In his book *Sodomy, Masculinity and Law in Medieval Literature: France and England, 1050–1230*, William Burgwinkle makes this issue

evident, claiming, “She [Lady Natura] is the creator of the world, in some way external to it, and yet contained within its imperfection. Though she and the narrator single out sodomy as the principal source of natural corruption, it is clear that ‘sodomy,’ ‘Nature,’ and nature’s ‘creation’ all remain within the same symbolic confines” (171). It is evident that Nature herself is trapped within her imperfect creation, and thus, she becomes inextricably linked with the world’s “corruption,” or to use Alain’s terms, man’s “degeneration.” In fact, Alain depicts Lady Natura as hermaphroditic. For instance, the tools that Lady Natura must use—the hammer and the anvil—denote sodomitic and hermaphroditic practices simultaneously. While the hammer resolutely represents the active male, the anvil carries a dualistic meaning. In most cases, the anvil represents the female, who is viewed as “naturally” passive; however, it also represents the passive male partner, a figure viewed as *contra naturam*. Thus, the tools that Nature works with are representative of hermaphroditism—and also explicitly productive of hermaphrodites themselves. Mark Jordan claims that Nature’s hermaphroditic quality is her ability to beget with these tools of masculinity, even though she is resolutely feminine (71). I would like to expand his argument a tad further by suggesting that it is Nature’s ability to *use* both instruments in the procreative process that makes her hermaphroditic. In other words, Nature’s hermaphroditism originates from her ability to handle both tools. She must be able to utilize them before she can beget with them. Moreover, it is not only that she is a feminine figure who works with tools of masculinity. This reading holds gender more stable than I am arguing Alain’s text does. Rather, Nature herself is a “queer” figure who is able to use hermaphroditic tools (the hammer and anvil). This destabilizes not only gender, but a fixed, idealized Natura.

In addition, Lady Natura seems to be hermaphroditic in her inability to reproduce aesthetics, or, the process of giving birth to new things through artistic means. Although she is the one who mandates the dreamer to produce his poems, she does not seem to have the ability to sustain creativity. In Prose 2 of *Plaint of Nature*, Lady Natura is depicted as a writer. Alain describes her writing process as being effortless, but unfruitful: “With the aid of a reed-pen, the maiden called up various images by drawing on slate tablets. The picture, however, did not cling closely to the under-lying material, but quickly fading and disappearing, left no trace of the impression behind. Although the maiden, by repeatedly calling these up, gave them a continuity of existence, yet the images in her projected picture failed to endure” (108). It is clear via Nature’s struggling generative process in maintaining the images that, while Nature has a creative ability, she lacks the power needed to produce everlasting poems. But this moment isn’t really about poems; rather, it concerns procreation. As Sheridan states in a footnote, “Nature’s action here may symbolize the continuation of the human race by the birth-death cycle” (108). While Nature may be showing the dreamer the rapidity of existence, I think it has to with her own inability to sustain created beings. She gives beings a “continuity of existence,” yet they “fail to endure.” Her failure, I believe, is grounded, once again, in her implementation of gendered tools. Although Nature claims to be resolutely feminine,³ she implements an instrument that is closely associated with masculinity. More specifically, Nature uses the reed-pen, a tool that impregnates and creates new ‘beings’—the images on the tablets. Nature’s attempt to exist as a being—specifically a procreative being—

³ The initial description of Natura is a conventional representation of idealized feminine beauty. In Prose 1, the dreamer notices the sheen of her hair, the radiance of her face, the beautiful imagery of her dress, and the concealment of her members (implying her virginal state)

who is resolutely feminine, yet performs with a masculine tool is unsuccessful. The images don't last because hermaphroditism does not yield reproduction. Lady Natura serves as the hermaphroditic example of an engagement in artistic pleasure, rather than reproductive purpose. Just as Nature has attempted to create mankind with the "appropriate anvils" (155-56), she still does so with a hermaphroditic anvil. Unsurprisingly, an inherently hermaphroditic tool used by a hermaphroditic creator will reproductively fail.

Nature's hermaphroditic qualities matter to Alain's project as a whole in that they hint toward Alain's own interest in sexuality *and* gender. First, Lady Natura is not only a faculty of the dreamer's imagination, but also of Alain's own authorial faculty. Nature's hermaphroditism disrupts traditional criticism regarding the text's insistence on the regulation of sodomy. As Burgwinkle argues, Nature and Alain collapse into one another: "Where we look for Lady Nature behind the surface of textual description we find instead only Alain's own fantasy: Alain as writer/preacher/defender of tradition/dispenser of discipline, speaking for and through her" (173). While it may be true that Alain speaks for and through Nature—that Alain is Lady Natura in drag, as Burgwinkle claims—I find Alain does the opposite of defend "tradition." It is not that Alain seeks to regulate the sodomitical as a separate act outside of heteronormative relations, as Scanlon has argued. Instead of attempting to impose strict regulations, this reading shows that Alain is more interested in showing that all sexual relationships are actually queer relationships to an idealized Natura. Alain shows how even Natura herself inhabits and embodies this very "queerness." In other words, for Alain, shame is constitutive of sexuality in all its forms—and perhaps most deeply in those forms of sexuality that would claim for

themselves any ethical high ground. In that respect, Alain's *Plaint of Nature* may be a critique of the regulatory impulse emerging out of the Third Lateran Council. One danger of the Third Lateran Council's prohibitions against sodomy was that they might make sexual acts *con* (with) *natura* appear to be ethical rather than shameful. The *Plaint of Nature*, however, proposes a medieval ethics of shared, encompassing shame in tension with regulatory hierarchies. Thus, *Natura* as a hermaphrodite is important because it reveals that Nature herself cannot be securely held as one "thing," cannot decry a fixed "problem," because she herself inhabits the very problem she seemingly condemns or bewails. Calling on Nature to "set things right" is insufficient because of Nature's own inherent hermaphroditism. Calling on or for a "norm" is impossible, because, to be fully 'normal' is, strictly speaking, impossible. Even Nature herself isn't the "norm" because she isn't consistent in terms of sexuality or gender.

IV. A Return to Shameful Pleasure/Pleasurable Shame

And thus, it is no surprise that the dreamer represents himself as hermaphroditic as well, since Lady *Natura* is a figure for his own perception of the natural world, his remaking of that world in his own reason. Thus, because Lady *Natura* is a figure for the dreamer's own rational and sensory perception of the natural world, her hermaphroditism is something that the dreamer himself has—in effect—created. And, it turns out, his own hermaphroditism is a reflection of her image because she is an intrinsic part of the dreamer. After the dreamer openly laments gender oscillation in Metre 1, he moves into his honeycomb speech—a poetic articulation of his unstable gender identity. When the dreamer mentions the beauty of Helen of Troy, he begins to wonder why such lovely maidens are left with uncultivated kisses: "Why do so many kisses lie fallow on maidens'

lips while no one wishes to harvest a crop from them? If these kisses were but once planted on me, they would grow honey-sweet with moisture, and grown honey-sweet, they would form a honeycomb in my mouth. My life breath...would go out to meet the kisses...so that I might thus expire” (70-71). This statement suggests the dreamer’s shift in gender identity and carries sodomitic implications. Whose kisses does our narrator mean to harvest? Does our narrator desire the lips of the maiden, or the kisses given to her by *men*? While both readings are sound, I believe the latter provides us a way of reading Alain’s text through the lens of ‘unnatural’ sex, gender, and sexuality. One possibility is that he desires the same-sex kisses, in which case we can see this as a sodomitical moment. Another possibility is that he identifies with the maiden, in which case it is a gender-crossing moment. In either case, we can see how “disordered” gender and “disordered” sexuality overlap with one another for Alain. For instance, the kisses emphasized here are not the maiden’s, but ones that “lie fallow” on her lips. This implies that the dreamer fantasizes the original giver(s) of these uncultivated kisses: men. Furthermore, this moment intimates the dreamer’s hermaphroditic nature, which is presented to us when the dreamer employs the phrase, “If these kisses were but once planted *on me*” (71, my emphasis). This implies that the dreamer has imagined himself shifting into the passive role due to the fact that he is the recipient, rather than the giver, of these kisses. But the dreamer has clearly asserted his masculinity in condemning the unmaning of man three pages prior with his bold statement, “The active sex shudders in disgrace as it sees itself degenerate into the passive sex” (67-8). For this reason, we are able to characterize the dreamer as a hermaphroditic figure because he simultaneously associates himself with masculinity and femininity. It is not only the fact that he desires

to be kissed instead of initiating the kissing, but also that these kisses seem to impregnate the dreamer with honeycombs. Here, the dreamer's passive role is again emphasized in that the kisses given to the maiden by men are depicted as impregnating the male dreamer. Therefore, the dreamer is established from the onset as a kind of hermaphroditic figure due to his oscillating between gender positions. And, to rearticulate, a receptive male automatically becomes a hermaphrodite, despite normative genitalia. Essentially, in the dreamer's honeycomb fantasy, we are reminded that Alain deploys sodomitical sex and hermaphroditic gender as being inseparable from one another.

Coming just after the dreamer's poetically provocative experience of shame, this honeycomb speech is entrenched in pleasure. The language used in this monologue seems much more intimate, or pleasurable. The alternation between pleasure and disgust, as it is explicated by the dreamer's opening lament and the subsequent honeycomb speech, celebrates hybridity. The coexistence of pleasure and shame reveals the fact that they are inseparable for the dreamer. But the oscillating affect does not merely prompt the dreamer's poetic production. It is also a structural feature of the text itself. The *Plaint*, in its formal qualities, goes back and forth between poetry and prose. It may be argued that Alain is simply adhering to the traditional format of the dream vision genre; however, I would like to suggest that Alain's text is itself hermaphroditic in its alternations. It is a hybrid of rhetoric. Just as there is essentially no stabilized "natural order," since *Natura* herself is a queer figure, and just as the dreamer alternates between pleasure and disgust, so does the text itself refuse to sustain a stable formal quality. Thus, the text's formal qualities dovetail its thematic interests in sexuality and gender. In terms of the shame/pleasure dichotomy, any form of pleasure, including that inherent in condemning

others, should be, in ethical terms, subject to shame as well. The only ethical pleasure is that which is positioned in shame—not cleansed of it. The broader stakes of the textual hybridity suggest that *any* account of the natural order is mired in perverted grammar, sodomitic desires, and hermaphroditic identifications. Thus, any strict regulation of anything *contra naturam* is impractical.

In suggesting that all pleasure is implicated in shame, Alain codes all sexuality as queer. And it is this queerness that proves to be a vector of shame. To highlight this, let us turn to the paradox of the “upright” man. In Metre 6, Lady Natura comments on fraudulence. She returns to the degeneration of mankind, linking man’s fraudulence with his lack of shame for things against the “natural order,” although as we have seen, there is no stable natural order. All accounts of such are “queer” because they are not free of perversions of sexuality, gender, and even grammar. This lack of shame from upright men, however, is what Lady Natura deems “fraudulent,” noting,

Without shame a man, no longer manlike, puts aside the practices of man.

Degenerate, then, he adopts the degenerate way of an irrational animal.

Thus he unmans himself and deserves to be unmanned by himself (168).

Here, Lady Natura suggests that the unnatural qualities of man have to do with man abandoning his own humanity. Man, in lacking shame, strips himself of all that is “manlike,” and, instead, adopts animal-like practices. Shame, as it is explicated here, is a particularly human emotion, due to man’s relationship to the divine, as well as man’s relationship to his neighbor. Here, then, Alain suggests that ethics exceed the confines of man/God relationship. It is also about interpersonal, earthly relations. In this moment, the public looks to these upright men in order to understand how to be respectable beings.

People seek to understand ethics by communicating with these upright men. These relations are breached when man ceases to repent his “unnatural” acts, or lacks shame, and thus, abandons his humanity—his “nature.” Thus, ethical relations shift from a vertical hierarchy (man → Nature → God), but rather to a horizontal plane (man-man). Nature’s demanding that the active sex feel shame for considering “unnatural” acts, behaviors, and identities pleasurable seems to again suggest that shame constitutes a loss—both of pleasure and of communication or relations between individuals. Essentially, I propose that Alain’s aim, as it is explicated here, also has to do with showing that all relationships are actually queer *interpersonal* relationships.

Plaint of Nature, especially this section, actually urges us to recognize that ethical personal relations are hard—they at once bemoan shame, yet require it. Metre 6 involves the pressure of uprightness, if we situate it within the context of Alain and his audience. As I have mentioned, Alain himself was a priest, writing as a chaste member of the Church, for an audience that was much involved in attempting to repress “queerness.” Given the historical context, Lady Natura’s potentially targets the Christian male, who is constantly striving for, yet failing in uprightness. In her claiming that, “Without shame a man, no longer manlike, puts aside the practices of man,” we see how the notion of Christian masculinity is founded in shame. In other words, a man—a Christian cleric or layman—who does not have or feel shame is not manlike. There is the emphasis on the necessity for shame, especially for Christian masculinity. In other words, here, the text suggests that to be an upright (Christian) man requires shame. Shame, then, becomes a fundamental part of Christian masculinity.

But this is indeed the paradox: There is a pressure to remain an upright Christian man, but this uprightness is undercut by shame. In other words, individuals look to and respect these men as models of uprightness, yet they [the men] have shame and have fallen short because of a lack of shame (it makes them “no longer manlike” and “put aside the practices of man”). This paradox is reflected in the syntax, which is not only extremely difficult in terms of comprehension, but also disordered. Considering the same phrase, “Without shame a man, no longer manlike, puts aside the practices of man,” we see how the syntax turns back on itself; it is not so direct about the relationship between shame and Christian masculinity. This syntactical reflexivity in Lady Natura’s comments on the upright man is potentially another hermaphroditic moment. The fact that the syntax itself is reflexive—that it at once relies on, yet complicates itself—reflects the hermaphroditic qualities of the *Plaint*.⁴ We notice how the syntax, in its reflexivity, works against the logic. It potentially serves to expose how ethical relations are themselves difficult because individuals strive to remain upright, but shame complicates this endeavor. Essentially, this moment suggests that a model of uprightness is always a failure because of shame. Shame is at once a symptom of moral failing, and that without which moral perfection is impossible.

Lady Natura’s condemnation of the shameless upright man, then, may also make us, the readers, examine ourselves, wondering if we feel shame for pleasure, or are frauds for not feeling shame at all. As Mark Jordan argues, Alain’s text surely wants to “change

⁴ As Fine argues, language in a medieval work—the words themselves—mirrors sex acts. As he notes, “[...] within medieval thinking, language is structured like a sex act. The affiliation between sex and text allows the medieval mind to recognize language’s failure to (re-)produce meaning resolutely. The medieval subject is one always threatened by the non-procreative pleasures of both sex and text and is therefore, a born sodomite” (2). Although Fine discusses the relationship between *Book of the Duchess* and *Plaint of Nature* than about the *Plaint* itself, his claim that language resembles a sex act in (some) medieval works aided me in theorizing about this particular sentence in Metre 6.

its readers by showing them images of themselves as they are and as they ought to be. It will shame them to abandon sin” (68). But I do not believe the goal of Alain’s text is that simple. It seems that Alain’s text shows readers that we cannot escape sin, how we are fundamentally human, and how we can only inhabit our shame more fully. In other words, shame is not the mode of abandoning sin, but rather the mode of understanding that sin is inescapable—and most especially in those moments when we strive to cleanse ourselves of it. Even in the act of reading—in attempting to navigate the disordered syntax—we find ourselves feeling ashamed. Are we unable to navigate the language because it is, itself, a hybrid? As I have already mentioned, the *Plaint*, in its formal qualities, perplexes readers due to its oscillating between poetry and prose, its inhabiting shame and pleasure simultaneously. Thus, the text’s formal qualities make it difficult for readers to “make sense.” The *Plaint*’s implicit hermaphroditism—the reflexive quality of the syntax and formality—may cause us to find ourselves feelings shame. The syntax requires us to read and reread and read again in order to (somewhat) figure out what the text is suggesting. As Lynch suggests, “[...] at times the most primary levels of meaning may be rendered obscure to us” (78). We, the readers, are implicated in the text’s syntactical chaos, just as these upright men get caught up in the complexity of shame and the paradox of uprightness. We are troubled by our inability to adequately and deftly make meaning from textual disorder. And yet, that shame we feel, that failing, is the point the dream vision seeks to instill in us. Though we are entrenched in shame, we are, at the same time, implicated in pleasure. We experience the coexistence of both affects. In recognizing that the only ethical pleasure is that which is marked by, not cleansed of, shame, we, too, are Alain’s hermaphrodites—our members rebelling against us.

V. Contemporary Queer Interest in the Ethics of Shame

Every “accomplice”—the dreamer himself, “upright men,” we the readers—experiences shame in recognizing the loss of pleasure once associated with a particular act, behavior, or identity. Alain, the medieval theorist of both sexual and gender poetics, opens the space for us as readers (like the dreamer) to self-examine and respond to “ethical” conundrums with both shame and pleasure. In recognizing that everyone, even “upright” men, experience shame, yet embrace pleasure despite that shame, I believe individuals—both medieval and contemporary subjects—can forge ethically productive relations. For ethics dismisses neither, but requires both. This is what, I believe, has been threaded throughout theoretical history (perhaps unconsciously). In other words, contemporary queer theories carry more historical and conceptual connections to medieval, religious attitudes toward sexuality than we might think. For instance, the contemporary theories of Michael Warner and Leo Bersani are representative of a queer interest in the ethics of shame.

In *The Trouble with Normal*, Warner comments on how shame (acts/doing) and stigma (identity/being) have tended to blur into each other within modern-day queer culture, noting,

Sexual deviance once was more a matter of shame than of stigma. Sodomy was a sin like fornication, not the sign of an identity. Anyone could do it. In the modern world that shame has deepened into stigma. As moralists began concentrating not simply on deeds but on kinds of persons, mere sex became sexuality. The act of sodomy came to be only one sign of homosexual identity among many (28).

As Warner explains, there is no longer a difference between being a homosexual and engaging in sodomitic acts, according to contemporary society. Rather, it considers the homosexual identity as characterized by “doing” sodomy, just as sodomitic deeds are quantifiers for being homosexual. Although Warner is writing about present-day society’s perceptions of homosexuality, his explication surprisingly echoes the dreamer’s opening lament, as well as Lady Natura’s delegations to Venus in the *Plaint*. As I have mentioned, the dreamer and his own imaginative faculty (Lady Natura) bewail and criticize man’s shifting between subject/male and predicate/female, for this has disrupted “manhood.” It concerns an act that has become an identity, which Warner suggests is contemporary society’s complaint. While Warner, here, is developing Foucault’s argument about acts versus identities,⁵ I suggest that this connection between medieval and contemporary theories revise that oft-cited claim about the Middle Ages. It might have been a moment when there was no homosexual identity, as such, but it was also a moment in which all *human* identity was rooted in sexual perversion. As I have proposed, Alain emphasizes hermaphroditism to explicate this notion (that all individuals are implicated in shame). Warner makes a similar move in citing indignity as the indicator of collective experience:

If sex is a kind of indignity, then we’re all in it together. And the paradoxical result is that only when this indignity of sex is spread around the room, leaving no one out, and in fact binding people together, that it begins to resemble the dignity of the human (36).

⁵ From the first volume of Michel Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*.

Both Alain and Warner envision an ethics of shared, encompassing shame—one that cannot be regulated because it implicates all individuals. Thus, the medieval-modern trajectory speaks to the instability of sexual “norms.”

In addition to Warner’s theory, Bersani’s articulation of the simultaneous embrace of shame and pleasure unite his and Alain’s ethics. In “Is the Rectum a Grave?” Bersani discusses the constitutive elements of male homosexual identity and desire, which includes this tension between shame and pleasure. For Bersani, this particular gay male identity involves struggling against definitions of maleness and homosexuality articulated and regulated by heteronormative society, but also recognizing the “renewable sources of excitement” that come from such definitions (209). In other words, there is a struggle against the inherently shameful definitions that oppress gay males in particular, all the while desiring those definitions. Bersani thus emphasizes pleasure, even in the face of shame. Just as the *Plaint*’s dreamer and formal qualities inhabit two seemingly paradoxical realms, so too does Bersani’s theory communicate the oscillation between shame and pleasure. Although an individual experiences shame, s/he may still return to its source due to its pleasurable aspect. Shame, then, can be a source of excitement. Thus, while sources of pleasure can yield shame, sources of shame can also yield pleasure.

Essentially, this is an important trajectory to understand because it shows that heterosexuality, too, has always been shamed. Even if normative sexuality has enjoyed material and social benefits historically (a point that has been crucial for tracing the repression and oppression of homosexuality), it is worth remembering that sexuality apparently *con* (with) *naturam* is not so elevated as it might pretend to itself. Indeed, *Plaint of Nature*, as a poetic document positioned right at the moment in which sodomy

was invented and stigmatized, reminds us that the regulatory impulse is an ethical failure in so far as it seeks to cleanse normative sexuality of its shame. This historical trajectory of shamed sexuality, from the twelfth century to now, reveals how the trouble with “normal” is that “normal” is volatile, no matter what the time period. Thus, such a stringent regulation of sexuality *contra naturam* is not only futile, but impossible because we are *all* implicated in “queer” sexuality. And thus, just as Alain’s syntax turns back on itself, just as Nature cannot be held stable throughout the *Plaint*, so too does the contemporary “natural order” become self-reflexive—a reflection of the shameful, yet pleasure-seeking hermaphrodite in all of us.

Works Cited

- Augustine. *The City of God*. XIV. Trans. Marcus Dods. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series*, Vol. 2. Ed. Philip Schaff. Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887. New Advent. Web.
- . *Confessions*. Translated by Henry Chadwick. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991. Print.
- Bersani, Leo. "Is the Rectum a Grave?" *October*. Vol. 43, "AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism." Winter, 1987: 197-222. JSTOR.
- Burgwinkle, William E. *Sodomy, Masculinity and Law in Medieval Literature: France and England, 1050–1230*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. JSTOR.
- Cadden, Joan. *The Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, and Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. Print.
- Fine, David J. "'Upon His Anvelt Up and Doun': The Impossible Paternities of Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*." MA thesis. Lehigh University, 2010. Print.
- Jordan, Mark D. *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997. Print.
- Lille, Alain de. *Plaint of Nature*. Trans. James J. Sheridan. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1980. Print.
- Lynch, Katherine. *The High Medieval Dream Vision: Poetry, Philosophy, and Literary Form*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988. 11-15, 21-45. Print.
- Scanlon, Larry. "Speaking the Unspeakable: Sexual Regulation and the Priesthood of Genius." *Romanic Review*, 86.2: 1995. 213-42. Print.
- Warner, Michael. *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999. 1-40. Print.

VITA

Laura Marie Brzyski was born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. As an undergraduate student, she attended DeSales University, where she studied English Literature and Secondary Education. Since leaving DeSales, Laura has continued her studies at Lehigh University, where she has earned her Master's in English and a graduate certificate in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Currently, Laura is pursuing a career as an educator of English in a secondary institution.