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Seeking as Suckling: The Milk of the Father in Clement of Alexandria’s Paedagus I 6

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Abstract

In Clement of Alexandria’s Paedagus I.6, the church acts as a surrogate mother maintaining access to the milk of the Word, which itself is suckled from the breast of God the Father (I 6.42.1.4-8). This passage, with its striking use of feminine imagery, has been used in assessing androcentric perspectives often found in the Church Fathers, particular by D.K. Buell (1999). This article argues that Clement’s gender-reversal language in this passage may also fulfil a broader set of purposes. In addition to the gendered connotations Buell focuses on, Clement’s argument draws on contemporary medical connotations and terminology to fulfil the strategy he employs in this chapter, so as to counter charges that Christian education was rudimentary. This article provides a contextual reading of the passage in question both with reference to this section of the Paedagus and in relation to relevant contemporaneous texts, taking special note of medical terminology.

Books such as Denise K. Buell’s Making Christians (1999) and Why This New Race (2005) have been celebrated for expanding the set of tools available for studying Patristic literature. In the history of a field dominated by textual arguments it remains uncommon for critical works to engage with systematic apparatuses such as gender studies, literary criticism, post-structural philosophy, or postcolonial and subaltern theories. Buell, one of the notable exceptions, focuses on identity language, presenting a convincing case that kinship and procreation metaphors are important to Alexandrian Christian self-fashioning.


Studia Patristica LXXII, 59-73.
In *Making Christians*, Buell points to Clement of Alexandria’s *Paedagogus* I 6 as a rhetorical demonstration used to establish a didactic patrilinearity for the church (of which he is a current representative).³ Clement presents the church acting as a surrogate mother, maintaining access to the milk of the Word:

ἐκκλησίαν ἐμοὶ φίλον αὐτὴν καλεῖν. Γάλα οὐκ ἔσχεν ἡ μήτηρ αὐτή μόνη, ὃτι μόνη μὴ γέγονεν γυνη, παρθένος δὲ ἀμα καὶ μήτηρ ἑστίν, ἀκήρατος μὲν ὡς παρθένος, ἀγαπητικὴ δὲ ὡς μήτηρ, καὶ τὰ αὐτῆς παιδία προσκαλουμένη ἁγίῳ τιθηνεῖται γάλακτι, τῷ βρεφώδει λόγῳ.

I love to call her ‘church’. This mother, being only [mother], did not have milk, because she was not only a woman, however, she was at once virgin and mother; pure as a virgin, loving as a mother, and calling her children she gives them holy milk, childish reason. (Paed. I 6.42.1.4-8)

Clement goes on to equate the milk with the body of Christ, describing the Christian as encouraged to cast off flesh and receive a new nutritional regime. He identifies the blood and flesh in *Jn.* 6:53-4 with the Word, and argues that truly nourishing milk is suckled from God the Father:

Ἡ τροφὴ τὸ γάλα τοῦ πατρός, δι’ ὃ γούν δὲ ἡμαῖς παρθένοις φόρος τῆς ἀγάπης χορηγεῖ, καὶ οὗτοι ὡς ἀληθῶς μακάριοι μόνοι, ὅσοι τοῦτον θηλάζουσι τὸν μαστόν.

This food is the milk of the Father, by which alone we infants are nursed. Thus the Beloved himself, the Word, is also our food, the one who poured out his blood on our behalf, to save humanity. Because of the Word we who believed in God escape to the ‘care-banishing breasts’ of the Father, the Word. The Father alone, however, as is fitting, supplies us infants with the milk of love – and only these are truly satisfied; whoever suckles at this breast. (Paed. I 6.43.3.1-44.1.1)⁴

For Buell, Clement’s kinship metaphors codify his relationships with those he teaches (the church). In addition, his nourishment language emphasizes a specifically male line by which that teaching is transmitted. Metaphors of maternity are always used ‘to represent the individual without power’ in the transmission of authority; gender content is central to the chapter.⁵


Although highlighting gender, Buell openly states that ancient biology has no part in her account, which comprises an ‘attempt to analyse the rhetorical implications of Clement’s use of kinship and procreative language’.

This focus draws heavily on her earlier argument that procreation metaphors in Clement should not be derived from medical or scientific literature:

Clement’s primary metaphor for the procreative act cannot be traced directly to either Hippokratic or Aristotelian texts. Neither of these sources offer a precedent for describing the very act of procreation as analogous with the sowing of seed into a field/soil. On the other hand, these sources do share in common with Clement an association between the maternal role in procreation and the earth (at least as a supplier of nourishment in embryonic growth) and between the embryo and a growing plant. This observation suggests what historians of science have increasingly argued – namely that scientific theories are always grounded in culturally specific metaphors.

Clement’s metaphor includes at least one nuance the medical literature lacks, namely the direct analogy between procreation and sowing seed into a field. Therefore, Buell is correct to suggest that his nourishment semantics cannot be reduced to their medical context alone. This conclusion leads, however, to a reading of *Paedagogus* I 6 in isolation from the medical resonances of its rhetoric. In what follows, I suggest an alternative reading, building on some of Buell’s reasoning as a step up into assessing how Clement contests his control of knowledge, whilst demonstrating the importance of medical terms for his argument. With this reading I argue that a medical background proves instrumental, both for understanding Clement’s vocabulary and for grasping the argument of *Paedagogus* I 6 in defence of the Christian’s education.

**Background and exegetical argument**

*Paedagogus* I 6 likely played a role in the teaching of Christians throughout Clement’s life in Alexandria and Palestine; both ethical-pedagogical moralizing

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8 On the specific importance of the medical, physiological, but most importantly physical and inhabited body in early Christian writing, the best recent treatment is Jennifer Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge: Early Christian Bodies* (Oxford, 2010). Influential for Glancy, and rightfully so, is the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose corpus is best accessed via his *Phenomenology of Perception* (trans. Colin Smith: London, 1962). The importance of embodiment as a usable concept in the field is well demonstrated in a work such as Mladen Popović, *Reading the Human Body: Physiognomics and Astrology in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Hellenistic-Early Roman Period Judaism* (Leiden, 2007).
and theoretical-pedagogical instruction saturate the pages of the three-volume *Paedagogus*. The prevalence of the latter type (clustered at the beginning of the first book) also suggests that the intended recipients included those who would themselves go on to teach, since they are already expected to grasp material directly related to the philosophy of learning and education. Furthermore, Clement’s community included people lacking Greek *paideia* ([Paed. III 11.78.1.3-3.14](#)), but many passages assume a reader interested in technical, philosophical, or poetic literacy. One pertinent example of this sort of engagement with literate culture comes at the opening of the third book, in which the Delphic maxim to ‘know thyself’ assumes importance as an embedded focal point for instruction (*i.e.*, not marked as quotation; [III 1.1.1](#)).

Gendered nourishment language first appears in *Paedagogus* I 6 as part of an elaborate, part-exegetical argument. Clement writes as a challenge to those who are ‘puffed up in knowledge’ ([οἱ εἰς γνῶσιν πεφυσιωμένοι](#); argument at [XXV 1.5-10](#)) those who say that when Christians are called ‘children’ was appointed (or possibly compelled) at some point following the Severan difficulties in 202/3CE (6.8.7). The exact logic of the dating is a little blurry, since there is no reliable way to date the letters and Eusebius is hardly a reliable historian. There are two letters in VI 11, of which the second mentions Clement. It is addressed to a group in Antioch on the ascent of Asclepiades to the leadership of that church, arguably dated early in Alexander’s episcopate due to the importance of performance under the persecution (ending in 211 with the death of Severus) for the appointment of both Alexander and Asclepiades. Assuming this Clement can be associated with the Clement of the later letter (VI 14), Clement is active in Palestine around 211. As for the second letter in VI 14.8-9, Alexander implies that Pantaenus and Clement are both deceased (‘having gone before us’, προοδεύσαντας). A letter written to Origen in Palestine seems unlikely, so this must predate his relocation in 232 CE (VI 26) if there is any truth to Eusebius’ statement that Alexander of Jerusalem treated him as their only teacher (VI 27). So the date of death must lie between 211 and 232. It is perhaps possible to pin down 215 (as Osborne does) on the basis that nowhere is there any hint that Clement and Origen at any point coincided in Palestine, and yet Origen was in Palestine with Ambrose ca. 215-216 at the time of the troubles in Alexandria under Caracalla. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, Osborne makes a convincing point, albeit largely constructed from silence.

10 On the former we need look no further than the handbook of ethical and moral advice that comprises book two which includes chapters on, for example, food (II 1), drink (II 2), procreation (II 10), and even footwear (II 11) as well as the extensive closing ‘recapitulation’ of the means to a good life (Ἐπιδρομὴ κεφαλαιώδης τοῦ ἀρίστου βίου) in III 11.5-83, which includes those concerns for regulatory behaviour alongside philosophical and moral advice. As for the latter, a good example is the emphasis on teaching produced by the characterization of the divine Word as different types of discourse (προτρεπτικός, ὑποθετικός, παραμυθητικός; I 1.1-4) responding to different features in man (as well as the subject matter of I 10). This itself rests on a significant philosophical foundation; see Aristotle, *Poetics* I 1447a28 for the threefold division ([Rudolf Kassel, Aristotelis de arte poetica liber](#) [Oxford, 1966]), and Seneca, *Ep.* 95.65 = Posidonius Fr. 176 for the division of λόγος.

11 For example, the Samian Pythagoras (I 10.94.1); Antiphanes of Delos (II 1.2.3); Artorius’ *On Long Life* (II 2.23.1); Aristippus the Cyrenaian (II 8.64.1); Sappho (II 8.72.3); Philemon’s *Synephebus* in close proximity with Nicostratus and Aristophanes’ *Thesmophoriazousae* (II 12.122.4-124.3).

(παιδεῖς) and ‘little ones’ (νήπιοι) this implies the childish and basic quality of their instruction (τὸ παιδαριῶδες καὶ εὐκαταφρόνητον τῆς μαθήσεως προσηγορεύμεθα; XXV 1.5-6). In response he argues that perfection (τὸ τέλειον) is received in baptism (XXV 1.8), but that this perfection is ultimately completed in the following of Christ (quoting John 1:3-4; XXV 1.9-10). It is a type of perfection now, inasmuch as it is also the forerunner to perfection later; in the same way, the person suffering from cataracts gains perfected vision due to the removal of the cataract, but must then employ clear vision continuously (XXVIII 1.24-7). He makes heavy use of 1Cor. 14:20 and 13:11 as well as Gal. 3:23-5, 26-8; 4:1-5; talk of children and spiritual growth is talk of the salvific process (XXXII 4.24-5).

A hostile use of 1Cor. 3:2 occupies Clement for the remainder of the chapter. Clement challenges what he calls the ‘Jewish’ (ιουδαϊκῶς) reading, which takes as its starting point the observation that whoever is referred to in 1Cor. 3:2 remains unable (οὐδὲ ἄκουσθε) to eat solid food (βρῶμα). If Christians are the subject of the saying, especially since Clement refers to them as infants, this passage can therefore be read as implying that the Christian remains in a state of basic intellectual development (XXXIV 2.6-12). In response to this, Clement adduces his own scriptural parallel, producing an aporia which allows him to determine the basic meaning of the text (τὸ ῥητόν).13 His exegetical method embraces multiple layers of meaning, so asserting one ‘true’ reading of the text is not his goal.14 Rather, Clement engages in exegetical competition, showing that his way to read the text both excludes the attack of his opponents on Christian knowledge and demonstrates awareness of natural science.

The aporia is as follows. Ex. 3:8 and 3:17 imply that the final state of perfection (τὸ τέλειον) is the land of milk and honey, whereas 1Cor. 3:2 implies that milk is for those who are babes in the faith, and solid food is for adults. How can the Christian claim, as Clement does, to be perfected in baptism (which would place them in the state referred to by Exodus), but still accept the saying of Paul in 1Cor. 3:2 (XXXIV 3.22-23)? In response, Clement argues that the γάλα (milk) and βρῶμα (solid food) of 1Cor. 3:2 are substantially identical, brought together in the λόγος as what life-nourishing milk (γάλακτος ζωοτρόπος) is by nature (οὐσία), rather than allowing a contradiction to stand between 1Cor. 3:2 and Ex. 3:8,17 (XXXV 3.15).

What Clement calls the simpler truth (ἐπὶ τὴν ἁπλότητα τὴν ἀλήθη), is that biologically milk originates from blood in the process of pregnancy and birth (XXXIX 1.19-20). This is demonstrated in a long catena running from XXXIX 1.20 (πρωτόγονον γὰρ...) to LI 2.6 (... τοὺς νηπίους); a catena heavily resembling the thought of contemporary medical writers, such as

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14 See Clement, Paed. I 5.12.1.5-7; Strom. V 9.56.1-57.1
Galen.\textsuperscript{15} Since milk and blood are thus linked, milk cannot be prior to blood or separate from it.

His argument then puts this justification to use. Blood is, in substance, (κατ’ οὐσία) the same as milk. Therefore, milk and food are not true exclusives in the scriptural passage, but spoken of figuratively. They must symbolize something other than division between before/after or ignorance/knowledge, in accordance with the clarity that waits according to 1Cor. 13:12.\textsuperscript{16} Ultimately, both milk and food represent Christ, who works as initiator of the salvific process and fulfiller, as both Alpha and eschatological Omega (XXXVI 1.18-23). Clement exploits the overlapping meanings of βρῶμα and τροφή: Christ is ‘simple, true, real, spiritual nourishment’ flowing from ‘breasts of tender love’ (ἀπλὴ καὶ ἀληθεὶ καὶ αὐτοφυεὶ τροφὴ τῇ πνευματικῇ τουατή γάρ ἢ τοῦ γάλακτος ζωοτρό- φος οὐσία, φιλοστόργοις πηγάζουσα μιστοῖς; XXXV 3.15).

Thus the Word can be spoken of as both milk and meat. In fact, he can be spoken of allegorically (Ἀλληγορεῖται) in terms reflecting several kinds of physical or spiritual nourishment: solid food, meat, nourishment, bread, blood, and milk (βρῶμα καὶ καὶ κατ’ οὐσία καὶ εἴδωλος καὶ αἴμα καὶ σῶμα; LXVII 2.13-5).

Clement’s argument in Paedagogus I 6 expresses the nourishment God is willing and eternally capable of providing (XXVII 2.14-6). Language of the Christian as ‘child’, bundled up with this rhetoric, therefore reflects relationship to God, not just characterisation of education. Significantly with regard to gendered language, the nourishment of the νήπιοι by μήτηρ παρθένος (the ἐκκλησία; XLII 1.16-9) takes the form of the body of Christ (τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ; XLII 2.21); the believers are only fed by the milk of the Father (τὸ γάλα τοῦ πατρός) which is the λόγος (XLIII 3.10-1). This nourishment is sourced in the (quoting Homer) ‘care-banishing breasts’ (τὸν λαθικηδέα μάζον) of the Father (XLIII 4.13-4).\textsuperscript{17} Further differentiating this nourishment from being feminine, the rebirth stands dissimilar to human birth in that the nourishment (προφη) is unlimited since it is from God (XLI 3.11-3).\textsuperscript{18}

Buell argues convincingly that such thinking, taken cumulatively, constitutes a rhetorical disenfranchisement of the female from the mothering role, transposing the conception, parturition, and lactation of the mother to the divine father.\textsuperscript{19} The fact that the physiological content of this nourishment language functions as gendered language is a vital component for Clement’s exegesis, since his reading depends on an understanding of that terminology.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{15} Galen, In Hipp. Librum de alim. 3.15.


\textsuperscript{17} For the source of the expression see Il. 22.83.

\textsuperscript{18} This is similar in theme to the Johannine Christ’s statements of all-sufficiency in, for example, John 4:13-4 and John 6:35, 48-51.

\textsuperscript{19} D.K. Buell, Making Christians (1999), 178.

\textsuperscript{20} This marries well with the often ‘somatic’ vocabulary of Greco-Roman literary technology; see J. Schott, ‘Plotinus’s Portrait and Pamphilus’s Prison Notebook: Neoplatonic and Early
consistent this articulation of maternity is with the ‘seed and soil’ procreation model, thereby applying the same conclusions she drew earlier in the book about the non-applicability of medical context. Thus in her discussion of ‘Clement’s selection and use of particular physiological metaphors’ medical connotations play no role, instead replaced by narrative criticism.21 Frequent references to Galen and Aristotle occur in the footnotes, but this content is limited to illustrative juxtaposition. Clement’s interpretation is intended, she argues, to enable his self-location in a specific ‘patrilineage of authority’, and the main rhetorical framework plays out by mobilizing and harnessing maternal imagery.22

One cannot deny that gendered language occurs throughout Paedagogus I 6. In my view, however, Buell’s reading neglects the full force of Clement’s rhetoric by virtue of executing a problematic methodological slide. After all, the irreducibility of a physiological metaphor to its medical origins does not entail that medical context is irrelevant when discussing Clement’s physiological language. Buell treats scientific and theological discourses as units somehow sealed with regard to culture, as in her statement that scientific theories are grounded in (but are not themselves) culturally specific metaphors.23 Once the scientific discourse is separated from the procreation metaphor, it can therefore be disregarded in any case where that metaphor is used, such as Paed. I 6, because it lacks specific cultural scope in itself. In contrast, as Daryn Lehoux argues, science in the Roman Empire is never far from legal, magical, rhetorical, and political metaphors and analysis, and ‘we cannot understand either use, neither the scientific nor the judicial, in isolation’.24

Indeed, as we shall see, despite the high concentration of nourishment semantics in Paed. I 6 there is little contextual evidence that the only function of that language is the building up of the ‘patrilinear’. In what follows, I outline an alternative reading of Clement’s metaphors of the motherhood of the church and the breasts of the Father, building on Buell’s insight into gendered dynamics whilst also paying appropriate attention to the scientific content and context.25 The physiological vocabulary found throughout Paed. I 6, whatever

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23 D. K. Buell, *Making Christians* (1999), 30; see 180: ‘even “natural” phenomena are social products in that they are made intelligible only through cultural sieves and discursive fields.’ The problem here lies in the idea of discourse as a filter, and some basic level of phenomena ‘beneath’ discourse.
24 Daryn Lehoux, *What Did the Romans Know?* (Chicago, 2012), 48-9; For a general overview of recent work on this part of the history of knowledge see the collection of articles in Jason König and Tim Whitmarsh (eds), *Ordering Knowledge in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge, 2007).
25 See a similar case with regard to Tertullian in Blake Leyerle, ‘Blood is Seed’, *Journal of Religion* 81 (2001), 26-48, esp. 31: ‘instead of one meaning being replaced by another, I suggest that this symbol [i.e., the biblical symbol of fertility] simply acquired additional meaning(s), becoming denser and more complex’.

we say about its gendered content, also reflects at least an attempt to tap into the medical tradition, in order to provide a refutation of the initial challenge to Christian education.

**Paedagogus I 6 and the medical tradition**

The medical tradition was likely readily available to a writer with some grounding in urban literate culture. The heritage of anatomy and medicine was strong in Alexandria throughout both the Hellenistic period and that of Roman control. In the third century BCE Herophilus and Erasistratus made key discoveries concerning the role of the brain and the nerves, and anatomical work appears to have been revivified by the second century CE.\(^{26}\) An example of the longevity of this concentration of medical talent was Marinus, to whom Galen (129 - ca. 216 CE) acknowledges his own debt during a four-year stay in Alexandria (possibly around 153-157 CE).\(^{27}\) This heritage renders Clement’s own exposure to medical learning eminently plausible, and so the medical language in the chapter can reasonably be permitted to speak to Clement’s intentions.

For example, instead of talking solely of νήπιοι and παῖδες, which a quick search of the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae indicates to be widely acknowledged terms for ‘infant’ and ‘child’, Clement utilizes ἕμβρυον (XXXIX 3.26). This is terminology familiar to readers of Hippocrates,\(^{28}\) Aristotle (with only one usage not being from the Historia animalium or De generatione animalium), and especially Galen (in whose surviving writings it occurs more often than in Hippocrates, demonstrating its contemporaneous currency).\(^{29}\) In talking of the embryo or child having been conceived, Clement uses the term κυησάσης

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\(^{27}\) Galen, *Lib. Prop.* 19.25-30 (G. Helmreich, J. Marquardt, and I. Müller, *Claudii Galeni Pergameni scripta minora* [Leipzig, 1891]). In making these comparisons, the online Thesaurus Linguae Graecae has been indispensable. All editions used are available via this source.

\(^{28}\) See for example Hippocrates, *Aph.* 5.52; the word appears 83 times in surviving Hippocratic works almost always in reference to a human embryo.

\(^{29}\) That usage is from the *Fragmenta varia Cat.* 7.39.282.2, preserved in Clement, *Strom.* VI 16; Aristotle’s usage is closer to that of a natural scientist, often as a general term of reference for the embryos of other mammals, for example *De generatione animalium* 773b5; τὸ τῶν ἐλεφαντῶν ἐμβρύον.
(XXXIX 2.22), another term absent from scripture in any variant but occurring quite regularly in the forms κύημα and κύησις in Hippocrates, Aristotle, and Galen, as well as in papyri.

From Paedagogus I 6.39.2-41.2 a semantic field of physiological mechanics plays out. The mother develops tenderness of an anatomical bent (φιλοστοργία; XXXIX 2.22-3). Although φιλοστοργία could easily reflect the tender love of a child or family member the συμπάθεια here refers to a sympathetic affection of the body such as that in Soranus or Galen. It is combined in Clement with the physical orientation of the breasts downwards towards the child, away from the husband (XLI 1.27-2.3), the inflammation of the breasts (φλεγμαίνοντας ... μαστούς; XXXIX 3.1), as well as the process of natural dissipation (φλεγμαίνοντας ... μαστούς) of the blood in the same passage, τὸ ἀγγεῖον (‘veins’), and the ‘tension’ (διατάσεις) of pregnancy (XXXIX 5.8-11).

Each of those terms retains its gendered resonances whilst also being bound up with illustrative medical or anatomical context. In writers such as Hippocrates and Galen φλεγμαίνοντας, ‘to be swollen’, relates not only to φλέγμα, ‘inflammation’ or ‘heat’, but also to φλεγμαίνω, which can carry the meaning of being heated, ‘caused to swell up’, ‘filled’, or even ‘nourished with food’. Although Clement possibly partly misuses ἀνάχυσις, the term is a medical one relating to effusion and expansion in the bowels, stomach, or gut (γολόν), and from one use in Galen that it can be used of circulation. The ἀγγεῖον are used in Clement for ‘veins’ rather than just ‘vessels’ in a specific medical use. Then διατάσεις has significant Aristotelian credentials, used for describing the tension of the abdomen (ὑποχονδρίων).

Any evidence that Clement himself devoted any significant time to medical study is conspicuous only by its absence. Nevertheless, Clement kills two birds with one stone; it serves him rhetorically and theologically to utilize this vocabulary. By harnessing the language of mechanical nourishment, language

30 κύημα, e.g. Hippocrates, Epid. 7.6; κύησις is also a common usage.
31 κύημα, e.g. Aristotle Generatio animalium 719b33 etc. (113 times), κύησις e.g. De partibus animalium 689a18; Generatio animalium 721a20 etc. (6 times).
32 κύημα (62 times); κύησις (3 times).
33 See P.Lond. 2.361.6 (first century CE).
34 Soranus 1.15, 63; 2.22; Galen 8.30; 16.17.8.
35 Hippocrates, Loc. hom. 13.
36 Hippocrates, Prog. 18; Morh. 2.27; Galen, Nat. fac. 2.9.
37 Hippocrates, Prog.; Aph. 5.58.
38 Hippocrates, Loc. hom. 34.
39 Aretaeus Medicus 1.15.
40 De locis affectis libri VI 8.318.8.
41 See Galen, e.g. Nat. fac. 2.96.11; several clear examples in Hippocrates of an anatomical content, as well as some in Aristotle, e.g. De partibus animalium 650a33; 665b12; 692a13; 667b17; 680b14; De generatione animalium 740a22.
42 See Hp., Apt. 4.64; also illustrative is Arist., Historia animalium 493a20; Galen, De compositione medicamentum secundum locos libri x 13.101.14 etc.
that provides a pattern of the fullness of eschatological perfection by the command of the all-nourishing (παντρόφου) and generative (γενεσιουργοῦ) God (XXXIX 3.1), he deals with those mechanisms by which blood and milk can be said to be substantially similar. This comprises a move that is important for his exegetical point. In addition, however, Clement presents an effective rebuttal of the accusations he complained about at the opening of the chapter, namely that Christians were only capable of rudimentary learning. He presents an educated persona concerned with the symbolic and technical workings of physiology, with a concentration of medical language atypical for even his own work.43

Several particular instances reinforce this latter impression. First, his illustration of perfection by analogy to ‘cataracts’ uses the specifically medical terminology τὸ ὑπόχυμα τῶν ὀπθαλμῶν, which is a hapax legomenon in his work, and one that, being absent from Hippocrates but frequent in Galen and the second-century writers, would seem to be a later medical development (XXVIII 1.25).44 Likewise, the vast majority of occurrences of the term μαστός (‘breast’) in Clement’s surviving works occur in Paedagogus I 6, though the term in its plural form is notably frequent in Aristotle, Galen, Soranus, and Dioscurides.45 We mentioned διατάσεις above; διάτασις is only used this once. Likewise the characteristically anatomical use of κόρη for ‘pupil’ [as in of the eye] is rarely used in Clement, only once relating to the eye figuratively in the LXX/OG (XXVIII 1.24-7; Zec. 2:12), but relatively common in technical medical literature.46

Second, Clement collates medical data irrelevant to his main exegesis. He refers to talk of the blood as the substance (οὐσία) of the soul, though his disagreement is implied by his stating that some have dared to talk of the substance of the soul in such a way (ὡ δὴ τινες οὐσίαν εἰπεῖν ψυχῆς; XXXIX 2.21). This particular theory is attested by Galen, who himself attacks its proponents,47 the line of whom may go back at least as far as Erasistratus in third-century BCE Alexandria.48 Galen has a reason to mention the philosophical perspective, because he himself thinks blood is unnecessary in the

44 See Dioscorides Medicus (first century CE), De materia medica 3.81; Galen, Ars medica 1.402.6; De usw partium 3.760.17 etc.; Aquila (second century CE), Le. 21.20.
45 According to the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae index search, between them these authors account for the majority of uses of the term prior to Clement (who uses the term only 4 times); Aristotle (50), Galen (13), Soranus (13), and Dioscorides (18). The one other comparable set of uses is in the LXX/OG (13), and the majority of those in Song of Songs.
46 There are two more LXX/OG uses in Odes 2.10 and Sir. 17:22. Examples of the extensive (by comparison) medical usage include Galen, De usw partium 10.4; Hippocrates, Proph. 2.20; Rufus Medicus (second century CE) in περὶ ὄνομασιας 23.
47 De simplicium medicamentorum temperamentis ac facultaibus libri xi 11.731.2.
discussion;\(^{49}\) Clement notes the anatomical suggestion as a point of interest, otherwise expendable in the structure of his argument.

Third, two passages are present where he reports mutually inconsistent medical explanations: two theories on how the blood is supplied, one involving the transfer of blood through the umbilical cord (\(\delta\mu\varphi\alpha\lambda\dot{\omicron}\varsigma; \text{XXXIX 3.26-7}\)),\(^{50}\) and the other the redirecting of the menstrual flow (\(\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\mu\acute{\eta}\mu\acute{i}ν\varsigma\varsigma; \text{XXXIX 3.27}\)),\(^{51}\) as well as two variants on exactly how the blood turns to milk in the breast. The first involves \(\delta\iota\alpha\tau\alpha\acute{s}e\varsigma\varsigma\) (XXXIX 5.8-11), the second a whipping up of blood mixed with air becoming white like the spray on the Homeric sea (also XXXIX 5.8-11).\(^{52}\) The latter relates to an aside on semen attested in Aristotle,\(^{53}\) and the notion that it, along with milk, is produced from foam (\(\acute{\alpha}φρόν\)) by frothing up of blood with air (this also allows an etymological explanation of why sexual pleasure can be referred to as \(\acute{\alpha}φρο\delta\acute{i}\sigma\sigma\) (XLVIII 3.6-10). Here the demonstration, in showing Clement (and the Christian) to be educated, even overwhelms the purpose of presenting the exegesis of 1Cor/3:2. There is no benefit to presenting two clashing medical theories except to illustrate that one knows them both.

A brief comparison with the Odes of Solomon brings out the peculiar features of Clement’s use of gendered language.\(^{54}\) Ode 19 sings of the milking of the Father by the Spirit into the cup which is the Son (19.2) in order that none of the bountiful milk might go to waste (19.3). The Spirit then mingles her milk with that of the Father, and gives it to the elect (19.4-5). The womb of the Virgin takes this milk too, and she bears the child.\(^{55}\) The Ode stresses a developed theme of nourishment, birth, and care by the virgin mother of the Son, with a balanced structure: 19.1 (believer); 19.2 (Trinitarian statement); 19.3-5 (the milking, mixing, and giving of the milk of Father and Spirit); and 19.6-11 (the conception, birth, and care of the Son by the Virgin in the incarnation). The focal point is incarnational reality, and maternal imagery within an unfolding scheme of revelation. The gendered language takes central stage. Jennifer Glancy is clearly correct to point out that it creates a deliberately dissonant image (likewise in a text such as the Protoevangelium of James);

\(^{49}\) Ibid. 731.11: οὐδὲ τὸ ἀίμα ἀναγκαῖον when it comes to discussing the οὐσία τῆς ψυχῆς.
\(^{50}\) See Galen, De uteri dissection 2.907.7; De foetuum formation libellous 4.655.3; In Hippocrates librum vi epidemiarium commentarii vi 17a.989.1; Hippocrates uses the term over 50 times; Aristotle has 27; also see Sor. 1.57.
\(^{51}\) See Hippocrates., Aph. 3.28; Gal. 8.423; specifically on this transfer see Aristotle, Historia animalium 583a29-34 and Paed. I.6.48.1.29-30; also Galen, De usu partium 14.3.
\(^{52}\) See II. 4.426
\(^{53}\) Generatio animalium 735a29ff; Diogenes of Apollonia, pre-Socratic thinker, in HA 511b31-512b10, the only surviving fragment on this topic (Fr. 6.64 Diels and Kranz).
\(^{55}\) Milk features as the gift of the Word in Ode 35.5, with Ode 8.14 having Christ preparing his breasts for the elect (8.18).
womb and mother, virgin and breasts, coalesce in a text specifically focused on those themes.56

In contrast, Clement focuses on demonstrating his knowledge of medical material (largely concerning the circulatory system), and even shows it off with cases of double explanation. The womb and mother are almost entirely absent. Trevor Murphy calls this sub-elite exercise of collating intellectually-edifying material a process of ‘mastery’.57 Perhaps Clement deploys medical knowledge in order to do what Pliny does: to illustrate his mastery and control of a given discourse to a sceptical disputant.58

As for the accusation of rudimentary learning, a recently published article by Matyáš Havrda supports the general hypothesis of Clement’s use of vocabulary from technical handbooks.59 Havrda focuses on Clement’s epistemology in *Stromata* VIII, and concludes that Clement must have had access to some now lost work of Galen’s, perhaps the lost *On Demonstration*,60 due to the shared sophistication of Clement and Galen’s theories of demonstration (ἀπόδειξις).

There is one problem with Havrda’s argument. He relies on the claim that if there had been some sophisticated work *On Demonstration* that both Galen and Clement used, or a field of contemporary philosophy primarily concerned with demonstration from which they derived their language, it would have been mentioned or attested.61 This ignores the historical evidence we have several high profile cases of thinkers who, though hugely influential in their time, nevertheless failed to leave behind any lasting written corpus, such as Posidonius or Chrysippus. His counter-claim that we would expect to find some mention of a common source in Galen, even if the text did not survive, is plausible, but a non sequitur, requiring that if someone thought that a doctrine was important enough they would properly accredit it.62

Nevertheless, the case Havrda makes for comparison between Galen and Clement is convincing, especially in linguistic terms and considering the examples given in their explanations of apodeictic processes. This further supports my argument that Clement had some access to the language of technical treatises and the desire to use it in epistemological wrangling. Finding this

58 I have significant interest in exploring the encyclopaedic knowledge-power dynamic in Clement. Structural parallels abound; to give just two examples from T. Murphy, *Pliny* (2004) we find the similarly rambling grammatical form (35) and prevalent digressions (37).
60 Ibid. 375.
61 Ibid. 370.
62 See for example Christopher D. Stanley, ‘Paul and Homer: Graeco-Roman citations practice in the First Century CE’, *NovT* 32 (1990), 48-78.
type of language exhibited in Clement to defuse accusations of ignorance is then unsurprising.

In summary, Clement responds in *Paedagogus* I 6 to a specific attack on Christians for the childishness and negligibility of their education (τὸ παιδαριῶδες καὶ εὐκαταφρόνητον τῆς μαθήσεως; VI 25.1.2-3). His initial response develops into a longer exegetical discussion hinged on the interpretation of 1Cor. 3:2. His opponent, projected or otherwise, understands ‘meat’ and ‘milk’ in the passage to stand for distinct stages of Christian education, sees the statement of Paul as applicable to the Christian, and thus argues that the Christian has stalled at this basic level of learning. By demonstrating both exegetically and medically that the boundary between meat and milk is more fluid than his opponent thinks, Clement fulfils a dual rhetorical purpose. Not only does he illustrate a reading of 1Cor. 3:2 consistent with his much higher estimation of Christian learning (Christians are called children, παῖδες and νήπιοι, with regard to salvation and the church, not their learning), he also presents a persona of mastery over knowledge by deploying extensive medical terminology.

**Further thoughts**

At first glance *Paedagogus* I 6 appears to revolve around motifs of maternity, and it does undoubtedly contain gendered nourishment language. In this case, however, Buell’s interpretation overlooks the medical resources available from Clement’s context, thus also downplaying the seriousness with which Clement treats the initial challenge of ignorance. She rightly says that Clement is concerned with biological mechanics, to demonstrate milk and nourishment of νήπιοι to be of one οὐσία, and thus to justify his original position in making 1Cor. 3:2 and Ex. 3:8, 17 compatible. But Clement also shows off his grasp of medical terminology to defend the education of the Christian.

The test case of *Paedagogus* I 6 illustrates cannily the potential difficulties when gender is focused on to the neglect of other factors. Nevertheless, discussion of the power of gendered language remains important for understanding Clement and for the wider development of the field. The very fact that ‘Patristics’ is a recognizable form of identification for early Christian studies indicates

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an important element in the way our conceptual inheritance is characterised.\textsuperscript{65} There is call for caution, especially since the majority of written works that scholars deal with are rooted in cultures where, at least amongst the literate elite, the legal, cultural, and sexual status of women was usually subordinate to that of the men who held political power.\textsuperscript{66} In other words, the texts that shape and comprise the discourse of Patristics carry this subordination implicitly (and sometimes explicitly). Studies which pinpoint gender and its role in the field, such as Buell’s, are badly needed.

In particular, the large amount of source material in Clement calls for systematic, accurate attention. On the one hand, many of his references to women echo standard elite discourse of his time. He subscribes, for example, to the Aristotelian model of male heat (\(\theta\varepsilon\rho\mu\omicron\omicron\zeta\)).\textsuperscript{67} and his comments on women’s drinking and behaviour are par for the course.\textsuperscript{68} Pertinent passages of Plato’s \textit{Republic} are quoted more or less verbatim: women are capable of all things, but in all things men are stronger.\textsuperscript{69} Clement even states that women and men have different natures.\textsuperscript{70} Aristotle wrote influentially that the male \(\sigma\pi\epsilon\rho\mu\alpha\) contains within itself the principle of movement and ultimate nourishment (\(\tau\iota\nu\ \varepsilon\sigma\chi\alpha\upsilon\tau\eta\nu\ \tau\rho\omicron\phi\eta\nu\)) whilst that of the female contains only matter (\(\upsilon\lambda\nu\ \mu\omicron\nu\nu\nu\)).\textsuperscript{71} Clement adopts this, as well as the view that women require more monitoring when adolescent because of a voracious sexual impulse.\textsuperscript{72} Women must develop temperance, \(\sigma\sigma\phi\rho\omicron\sigma\nu\nu\eta\), as a matter of course.\textsuperscript{73} In fact, the married man is the most admirable not because of the positive qualities a marriage generates, but because he has overcome more trials and tribulations than the celibate.\textsuperscript{74} Similarities between Clement and Musonius Rufus, especially in terms of their views of sex, highlight a shared level of social conservatism.\textsuperscript{75}

\begin{thebibliography}{10}
\bibitem{} See Jane F. Gardner, \textit{Women in Roman Law and Society} (London and Sydney, 1986).
\bibitem{} \textit{Paed.} I 6.39.3.6; see Aristotle, \textit{Generatio animalium} 735a37-735b3.
\bibitem{} See \textit{Paed.} II 4 on drinking, \textit{Paed.} II 5 on women’s laughter; II 7 on the presence of a married woman at a men’s banquet; II 13 and III 2 on ornamentation and women as attracted to shiny things, as well as III 11 on the need to turn away from even the sight of women.
\bibitem{} Plato, \textit{Rep.} 455d; 457a10; see \textit{Strom.} IV 4.8.62.4.
\bibitem{} \textit{Strom.} IV 8.59.4-5.
\bibitem{} Aristotle, \textit{Generatio animalium} 766b3-15.
\bibitem{} Aristotle, \textit{Historia animalium} 581b13-22; see the passages in Clement discussed by G. Reydams-Schils, in D.E. Aune and F.E. Brenk (eds), \textit{Greco-Roman Culture} (2012), 128.
\bibitem{} \textit{Strom.} IV 62.4.
\bibitem{} \textit{Strom.} VII 70; see Strom III 4; IV 147, 149 for the relative merits of the married and the celibate existence.
\bibitem{} Musonius Rufus, in his \textit{Diatribe} 12.86.4-6 argues that the only just sex acts (\(\delta\dot{i}k\alpha\mu\alpha\ \dot{a}r\rho\omicron-\dot{d}i\sigma\tau\iota\)) are those performed in marriage for procreation. All others are lawless (\(\pi\alpha\rho\alpha\nu\omicron\mu\alpha\nu\)) to some degree (8.8-10). Sexually deviant men are just like pigs, happy rolling in mud (86.27-9).
\end{thebibliography}
On the other hand, some of Clement’s comments associated with the mothering role are permitted to the woman, such as in the argument that the church is rightfully called μήτηρ because she is full of love. Although women’s breasts are not blessed for teleologically complete nourishment, Clement suggests that the unspeakable (ἄρρητος) part of God is Father, whilst the part that has συμπάθεια with the believers is Mother. In one case, lifting an extended quotation from 1Clement that ends with examples of heroic biblical women, he extends the list to include pagan exemplary women (beginning with Theano, either the pupil or spouse of Pythagoras). It remains an open question, therefore, how far his valuation of women is likely to be reflected in the way he uses language that refers to matters of sex and gender, body and self.

What is clear, however, is that exploring Clement’s gender talk is another way of helping to contextualize an early Christian community at one of the most intellectually fertile (and historically opaque) points in historical Christian experience. I here provided a specific case study (Paed. I.6) in which an overly narrow focus on one specific type of metaphor shut down some of the discursive opportunities for our use of a text. I hope to have also demonstrated how a contextualized reading can enable us to more adequately contribute to a search, alongside Buell and others, for the strategies of communication and meaning in early Christian self-fashioning.

Compare with Strom. III 2.10.1, where the Carpocratian attitude towards sex seems put in place for copulation with dogs, pigs, and goats, as well as much of the rest of Clement’s attitude towards sex. On Musonius and others, see K.L. Gaca, The Making of Fornication (2003). For a more positive interpretation of Musonius Rufus, see G. Reydams-Schils, in D.E. Aune and F.E. Brent, Greco-Roman Culture (2012); her argument is that procreation is not sufficient for explaining the nature of the married relationship, but that relationship relies on the bond of mutual care and affection. However, she correctly does not challenge Musonius’ view on sex, which is entirely based on procreation when just and proper even though some sex acts would appear to be less lawless than others.

76 Paed. I 6.42.1.18-9, see also Paed. I 5.
77 Paed. I 6.41.3.11-2; Quis dives Salvetur 37.
78 Strom. IV 105-23; the quotation from Clement of Rome runs from 105-19, and then Clement’s addition for the remainder 120-3.