

Leeds Studies in English

Article:

Margaret Rogerson, 'Provincial Schoolmasters and Early English Drama', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s. 29 (1998), 315-32

Permanent URL:

https://ludos.leeds.ac.uk:443/R/-?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=123746&silolibrary=GEN01



Leeds Studies in English
School of English
University of Leeds
<http://www.leeds.ac.uk/lse>

Provincial Schoolmasters and Early English Drama

Margaret Rogerson

In the medieval and early modern period, a good number of English children spent several of their formative years in school and, in some cases, remained with their masters until their late teens.¹ Henry VIII saw schoolmasters as powerful allies in his campaign against the authority of the Pope: mindful of their potential to influence the young, he issued proclamations instructing them to promote an acceptable version of an Englishman's 'duty toward God, their prince, and all other in their degree'.² The schoolmaster's role in supporting the royal supremacy was by no means an insignificant one, nor did it diminish in the years following Henry's break with Rome. This is evident in the oath taken by the master of Kirkby Stephen School in the reign of Elizabeth (1566):

I shall not read to them any corrupt doctrine, or reprobate books or work set forth at any time contrary to the determination of the universal catholic church, whereby they may be infected.³

The schoolmaster could be a potent cure for the infection of papistry; conversely, if he did not follow the establishment line, he could be a cause of infection in young and old alike.⁴

In this paper I argue that schoolmasters also had an important role to play in the dramatic enterprises of the period to 1642. They promoted skills appropriate to the theatre in their classroom practice; they were the authors of plays performed in their schools; they orchestrated dramatic events for and on behalf of their local communities; and, in at least one instance, a schoolmaster used drama as an effective social protest. Alexandra F. Johnston has claimed that the graduates of English schools enjoyed positive outcomes from exposure to the pleasures of drama in the academy: 'poise and eloquence' that would stand by them in their professional lives, 'a love of the theatre that would allow them to plan and participate in theatricals at home

or in the court' and a disposition to become 'patrons of the professional troupes'.⁵ I suggest below that there were also positive outcomes for the schoolmaster himself and that it was in the interests of his continued tenure to maintain a high profile through the visible means of dramatic performance. The members of the teaching profession did not always enjoy admiration in the community at large;⁶ but public display of theatrical expertise could be used to impress those who, directly or indirectly, were responsible for paying their salaries.

John Aubrey, the late-seventeenth-century biographer, tells us that before Shakespeare established himself in London as an actor, playwright and theatrical entrepreneur, he earned his living as a country schoolmaster.⁷ We could wish for no more impressive demonstration of the relationship between provincial schoolmasters and English drama; and although Aubrey may not be the most reliable of commentators, this particular information holds some weight as it can be traced to Christopher Beeton, who was a member of Shakespeare's acting company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, in 1598.⁸

If Shakespeare did come to London to escape a less than rewarding life as a country schoolmaster, then we can see the opposite trend in the case of Stephen Gosson, a self-confessed failure in his attempts to succeed as a playwright in London and, according to fellow dramatist, Thomas Lodge, completely without talent as an actor.⁹ Gosson was also the author of two violent attacks on the English stage, and after publishing the first of these, *The Schoole of Abuse*, in 1579, he vacated the metropolis to work as private tutor to the children of a country gentleman.¹⁰ James Shirley, another well known man of the early modern theatre, also spent part of his adult working life in the teaching profession. In the early 1620s, Shirley was headmaster of the grammar school at St Albans. He left this post in 1624 to write for the London stage, only returning to his former profession when the theatres were closed in 1642.¹¹

The theatrical achievements of the masters associated with the boy theatre companies of London have been examined and extolled at some length;¹² so too have the endeavours of Nicholas Udall, headmaster of Eton (1534-1541), and Thomas Ashton, headmaster of Shrewsbury School (1561-1571).¹³ But there were many other provincial schoolmasters who made significant contributions to early English drama and there were towns other than London that could boast of their boy theatre companies.

Not all English schoolmasters were dedicated or successful in the ordinary practice of their profession. In 1622, Henry Peacham claimed that 'for one discrete and able Teacher, you shall finde twenty ignorant and carelesse, who [. . .] whereas

they make one Scholler, they marr ten'.¹⁴ This harsh censure may have been influenced to some extent by Peacham's own experience of vicious but unsuccessful attempts of 'ill and ignorant schoolemasters' to beat the love of painting out of him.¹⁵ Peacham's unhappy encounters with teachers who discouraged the art of painting may have been paralleled by the sufferings of others whose masters discouraged the art of the theatre. While the repeated attacks of the authors of anti-theatrical polemic make it clear that dramatic performance was part of classroom practice, there may have been some schoolmasters who agreed with the puritanical William Prynne, who claimed in 1633 that acting had no efficacy in teaching 'boldnesse, eloquence, action' and 'elocution'.¹⁶ There was at least one very influential anti-theatrical voice among the ranks of educators of the period: humanist writer Juan Luis Vives (1492-1540) recommended oral presentation of the classics, but only as long as it did not 'degenerate into the theatrical'.¹⁷ Fortunately, there seem to have been many who did not follow Vives' advice.

It is possible that a schoolmaster made his mark on the English theatrical scene as early as the twelfth century. Thomas Walsingham records an incident in the life of Geoffrey, Abbot of St Albans (1119-1146), that occurred while he was still a secular.¹⁸ According to the story, Geoffrey arrived in England from his native Maine to teach in the school at St Albans only to find that another had taken up the post before him. While he was waiting for the school to become vacant, he produced a St Katherine play at Dunstable. On the night after the performance, his house caught fire and he lost the copes he had borrowed from the Abbey of St Albans for his play. In his remorse, he determined to take holy orders. Delightful as this anecdote is, it does not answer all the questions that a theatre historian might want to ask, such as whether Geoffrey wrote the play himself, whether it was in English, and who the actors were. We cannot even be sure that Geoffrey ever practised as a schoolmaster, but in the absence of complete information, must content ourselves with the knowledge that someone who was thought qualified to teach also had the skills necessary to put on a 'miracula' of St Katherine.¹⁹

A. F. Leach, one of the pioneer modern historians of English schooling, makes strong claims for the theatrical activities of provincial pedagogues. Writing of Louth, he claims that here, 'as elsewhere the schoolmaster was the playwright or stage-manager of the day'.²⁰ He makes even more specific claims for Bristol, where he declares, 'as elsewhere the school supplied the public entertainments formerly found by the Corpus Christi and other guilds'.²¹ In Ipswich, he implies that the master of the grammar school served as pageant master to the Corpus Christi guild;²² and, at Beverley, he states that the grammar school provided plays for the entertainment of the

citizens in place of their suppressed Corpus Christi play.²³ Leach's views may seem rather extreme, but can be tested in the light of more recent research: while the links between the schoolhouse and guild entertainments might not be sustainable, the casting of the schoolmaster in the role of 'playwright or stage-manager' can be seen to make a considerable degree of sense.

Drama in the classroom

In the classroom, the schoolmaster expected to be in complete command. Sir Thomas Elyot, in *The Book Named the Governor* (1531), asserted that 'teachynge representeth the auctorite of a prince'.²⁴ Yet it is clear that many schoolmasters abused that authority. When Thomas Fuller offered a definition of the ideal schoolmaster in 1642, he was in agreement with Elyot that a schoolmaster 'is, and will be known to be an absolute Monarch in his school'.²⁵ The good schoolmaster would not be bribed by 'cockering Mothers' to spare their sons from the rod, but equally, would be 'moderate in inflicting deserv'd correction'. Fuller was strong in his condemnation of the large number of schoolmasters who went beyond the bounds of moderation in this regard and whose 'Tyranny hath caused many tongues to stammer, which spake plain by nature'.²⁶ But while a bad schoolmaster could cause his students to stammer through excessive discipline, a good one could actually cure stammering and natural shyness by means of theatrical exercises. Charles Hoole's experience of this practice, which he advocated strongly in the *Art of Teaching School* (1660), was that it had proved to be 'an especiall remedy to expell that subrustick bashfulnessse, and unresistable timorousnesse, which some children are naturally possessed withall'.²⁷

Long before the publication of Hoole's teaching manual, English schoolmasters had been using the educational methods he espoused. One such exemplary pedagogue was Ralph Radcliffe, master of Hitchin School in Hertfordshire (1546-1559). Radcliffe set up his school in the former Carmelite Priory in the town and, according to John Bale, wrote plays for his students to perform for the public in the refectory that he had conveniently converted into a theatre.²⁸ The spaciousness of schoolhouses in general recommended them to professional performers as well as to schoolboy theatricals and they were often specified as possible venues for travelling players.²⁹

Bale commended Radcliffe's work in his school theatre and urged him to have his plays and other original writings printed: unfortunately, his entreaties were to no avail.³⁰ One of the points Bale made in favour of the dramatic works was that they

transformed puerile stammering into elegant and well-enunciated speech. These plays also provided models of moral, Christian behaviour. Enactments of the 'rare patience of Chaucer's Griselda', 'Lazarus turned away from the rich man's door' and the 'amazing courage of Judith', for example, could not have failed to persuade the spectators that the schoolmaster had the ethical training of his charges well in hand. Bale's list of the original works in Ralph Radcliffe's library is in Latin, but we cannot be certain that the plays he wrote for his young actors were in that language. As two of them were based on Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, the *Clerk's Tale* and the *Tale of Melibeus*, it is tempting to assume that they were in the vernacular.

Educators of the period recommended the use of classical drama as a pedagogical tool in the teaching of ancient languages and as an 'especially effective means of teaching rhetorical skills and sound moral values'.³¹ It is clear that English schoolboys of the period were accustomed to taking part in performances of classical plays. This is indicated by William Horman's *Vulgaria* (1519), a collection of translation exercises to be used in the teaching of Latin and specially designed to catch the interest of its users through the inclusion of material related to their everyday life. There are numerous references to performance: for example, 'we lacke pleyers garments both for sad partis and mad'; 'I wolde haue a place in the middyl of the pley: that I myght se euery paiaunt'; 'we haue played a comedi of greke' and 'we haue played a comedi of latten'.³²

Oral presentation was an important element in schooling and students were constantly called upon to prove their verbal prowess. The advice to students on oral delivery in Robert Whittinton's *Vulgaria* (1520) is not unlike Hamlet's instructions to the players:

in pronunaciyon let them obserue yt they synge not or humme
not al in one toone as ye bee but (as ye dyuersyte of the mater
requyreth) somtyme with a basse or lowe voyce. somtyme with
an eleuate voyce. somtyme moderate or mean

[. . .]

se yt the gesture be comely with semely & sobre mouynge:
somtyme of the heed somtyme of the hande & fote: and as the
cause requyreth with all the body.³³

Charles Hoole recommended the following to schoolmasters as an approach to the teaching of Terence:

When you meet with an Act or Scene that is full of affection, and action, you may cause some of your Scholars, after they have learned it to act it, first in private amongst themselves, and afterwards in the open Schoole before their fellowes; and herein you must have a main care of their pronounciation, and acting every gesture to the very life.³⁴

It is possible that schoolmasters who used this method in their classroom teaching could develop into skilled theatre directors as readily as their students could become skilled actors.

Hoole was also aware that he could turn these pedagogical exercises to another purpose. He saw their value as entertainment and, possibly, as proof of his own excellence as a teacher when he exhibited the theatrical talents of his students to their parents and other invited guests on breaking up days before the Christmas, Easter and Whitsun holidays:

The higher Forms should entertain the company with some elegant Latine Comedy out of *Terence* or *Plautus*, and part of a Greek one out of *Aristophanes*, as also with such Orations, and Declamations, and Coppies of several sorts of verses, as are most proper for celebrating the solemnity of the time at hand, and to give satisfaction to the present meeting.³⁵

Performances of this kind were clearly intended to amuse the audience and uphold the dignity of the schoolmaster and his establishment.

Given the evidence of a widespread interest in dramatic performances amongst educators, it is possible that when Ben Jonson offered his back-handed compliment to the talents of members of the teaching profession in *The Staple of News* (1631), he was referring to schoolmasters in general rather than specifically to those associated with the London schools. The educational reforms suggested by *Gossip Censure* in this play could have been based on experience in the provinces as much as in the metropolis:

I would have ne'er a cunning schoolmaster in England [. . .] They make all their scholars playboys! Is't not a fine sight to see all our children made interluders? Do we pay our money for this? We send them to learn their grammar and their Terence, and they

learn their playbooks [. . .] I hope Zeal-of-the-Land Busy and my gossip Rabbi Troubletruth will start up, and see we shall have painful good ministers to keep school and catechise our youth, and not teach 'em to speak plays and act fables of false news in this manner, to the super-vexation of town and country.³⁶

This outburst is strong testimony to the success of schoolmasters as drama coaches as well as to the place of dramatic performance in the curriculum.

Schoolmasters as playwrights

Ralph Radcliffe of Hitchin was not the only schoolmaster who was active as an author in the provinces. In 1316, William of Wheatley, master of Lincoln Grammar School, composed Latin hymns for a Christmas play, presumably to be presented by his students.³⁷ Many schools traditionally presented plays at Christmas and on other religious festivals. In some instances, these seasonal presentations were written by the master and some of them were in English. The statutes of Westminster School dictated that, at Christmas, the headmaster 'should present a Latin and the usher an English play'.³⁸ At Winchester College, headmaster Christopher Johnson (appointed 1561), commended his scholars for a Christmas performance in 1564 that proved the value of drama in 'teaching oratory, pronunciation and action, and in raising and lowering the voice "as you shewed cleverly enough"'; and in 1565, Johnson himself wrote a Shrove Tuesday play for student performance, a morality in which "'Chastity the daughter of Abstinence" [. . .] was to be admired and followed "as much as Gluttony, whose daughter Lechery was to be avoided".³⁹ Hadleigh School in Suffolk was most fortunate in one of its headmasters (1622-1626), the poet William Hawkins, whose students performed his play, *Apollo Shroving*, on Shrove Tuesday 1626/7.⁴⁰

Schoolmasters and civic entertainments

Schoolmasters can be credited not only with writing plays designed for performance within their school communities but also with the authorship of dramatic entertainments staged for and on behalf of the broader communities of which the schools formed a part. There is some evidence that schoolmasters guarded the privilege of writing for local celebrations jealously: perhaps because of the prestige or the extra

money it brought them and their school. Mark C. Pilkinton has pointed out that the masters of St Bartholomew's Free School at Bristol frequently 'provided plays for the civic celebration of Christmas and orations for the annual festivities associated with both the Queen's accession day (17 November) and the Michaelmas swearing-in of the Mayor (29 September)'.⁴¹ When the town authorities engaged the services of Thomas Churchyard, a London man and well known mastermind of public dramatic events, to provide the speeches for the royal visit in 1574, the schoolmaster, apparently feeling that he had been wrongfully passed over, found a way to prevent the full performance of his rival's dramatic verses.⁴²

Elsewhere, Churchyard seems to have coexisted happily on such occasions with the local schoolmaster, as he did, for example, in Norwich on the occasion of Elizabeth's visit in 1578. The Queen was treated to a series of Latin orations from local dignitaries and to pageants devised by Churchyard.⁴³ One of the orations was presented, and possibly written by, Stephen Limbert, master of the Norwich Grammar School. When the schoolmaster stepped forward to speak, he was properly nervous and self-effacing and 'her maiestie drew neare vnto him, and thinking him fearefull, saide graciously vnto him: Bee not afeard'.⁴⁴ Limbert seems to have pleased the Queen with his Latin discourse, because she described it as 'the best that euer I heard'.⁴⁵

In 1580/1, when Sir Henry Sidney, Lord President of the Welsh marches, was visiting Shrewsbury, the four teachers and the scholars of Shrewsbury Free School played a prominent role in the festivities.⁴⁶ As the noble visitor left the town in his barge, the children, dressed as nymphs, made some 'lamentable oracions sorrowinge hys departure', so pitiful that people on the shore wept and Sir Henry himself was seen to 'chandge countenance', as well he might when confronted with such heartfelt misery:

O pinching payne, that gripes my hart, O thrise unhappy wight,
O sillie soule, what hap have I, to see this woful sight
[. . .]
Alas my sorrows doe increase, my hart doth rent in twayne.
For that my Lord doth hence depart, and will not hear remayne.⁴⁷

Whether one of the Shrewsbury schoolmasters wrote the verses is a matter of speculation, but it is clear that, in 1616/7, when Prince Charles visited Ludlow, the local scholars were star performers in the official welcome and their headmaster, Humfrey Herbert, was the principal author of the Latin speeches.⁴⁸ When Charles visited Nottingham as King in 1634, the local council engaged the services of the

usher of the Free School to prepare and deliver an oration.⁴⁹

Schoolmaster-dramatists associated with civic pageantry find their lofty eloquence parodied in *Love's Labour's Lost* (1594). If Shakespeare did work for a time as a country schoolmaster, his parody might have been based on personal experience. Shakespeare's pedant Holofernes devises a pageant of the Nine Worthies to be presented in honour of the visit of the French Princess and her train. This subject matter was common in civic ceremonial. In 1456, for example, Coventry greeted Queen Margaret with a series of speeches from biblical figures, saints, virtues, and the Nine Worthies who were placed on nine elaborate pageant stages.⁵⁰

In some towns, schoolmasters presented local entertainments on a fairly regular basis: this certainly seems to have been the case at Norwich. John Buck, headmaster of the grammar school (1556-1561), wrote speeches to be delivered in the pageants devised for the Lord Mayor's inauguration in 1556/7;⁵¹ and, in 1558/9, he was commissioned to write and present an 'interlude' by the then mayor, John Aldrich.⁵² In 1564/5, schoolmasters Mr Waterhall and Mr Favsytt were rewarded for an interlude played by their students in the Common Hall for the mayor and other civic leaders.⁵³ The Norwich Assembly Minute books for 1565/6 suggest that this was an annual Christmas event and that the headmaster regularly prepared his students to present 'som lerned dyalog and commodie or twoo commodies [. . .] to be lerned without boke [. . .] at the appoyntment of Mr Mayor'.⁵⁴ This tradition may have been in place as early as 1546/7, when the mayor paid the schoolmaster ten shillings for a student performance of an interlude in the chapel of the Common Hall 'the sonday afr Twelfth Day'.⁵⁵

Thomas Ashton, headmaster of Shrewsbury Grammar School (1561-1571) was recognised by his contemporaries as a theatrical entrepreneur. In *The Worthies of Wales* (1586), Thomas Churchyard, the organiser of pageants who provoked the jealousy of the schoolmaster at Bristol, speaks glowingly of Ashton, 'a good and godly Preacher', and his theatrical presentations in the town's quarry.⁵⁶ Ashton produced a number of major plays for the community and was paid handsomely for them.⁵⁷ His most lavish production seems to have been a play of his own authorship that was performed on the three days of the Whitsun festival in 1568/9:

a notable stage playe playeed in shrosberie in a place there
cally<.> the quarrell which lastid all the holly dayes vnto the
which cam greate nvmer of people of noblemen and others the
which was prayسد greatlye and the chyffe auctor therof was one

master Astoon [. . .] a godly and lernyd man who toocke
marvelous greate paynes therin.⁵⁸

One of his theatrical compositions was on the subject of 'the passion of Christe'.⁵⁹ This use of biblical subject matter and the timing of some of Ashton's presentations at Whitsun could be taken as evidence in support of A. F. Leach's claim that the schools took over from the town guilds as providers of local entertainment. A similar case can be made for York where in 1584, the schoolmaster, Thomas Grafton, was licensed by the council to 'set forth certane compiled speaches' at the Midsummer Show.⁶⁰ Grafton's entertainment involved processional performance of the kind that had been traditional for large scale community presentations in the city and was financed by the council and the craft guilds. The town of Louth, where there is evidence of a Corpus Christi play in 1515/6, might offer even stronger support for Leach's suggestion: here, in 1556/7, the Grammar School presented a play on Corpus Christi day itself.⁶¹ Yet despite the circumstantial links between the guild-sponsored plays and the work of the schoolmasters, there seems insufficient justification for concluding that contemporary audiences regarded the presentations of the teachers and their scholars as replacements for community-based drama. It seems likely that the dramatic entertainments of schools and the guilds had been co-existing for some time before the suppression of community religious theatre.

There were many other provincial towns where theatrical displays by young scholars under the direction of their masters were paid for from civic funds. Evidence of the practice is available from Bath, Beverley, Ludlow, Crediton, Plymouth and Liverpool in the late sixteenth century, and from Newcastle and Coventry in the early seventeenth century.⁶² It is clear that, in a large number of English towns, we could well describe the local students as 'boy theatre companies' of the provinces.

Schoolmaster-dramatists and the law

Not all schoolmasters found immediate respect for their theatrical activities from the establishment; some, in fact, ended up on the wrong side of the law. In 1582/3, the master of the Wells Grammar School was fined by the Sub Dean of Wells Cathedral for taking his scholars and the choristers of the cathedral to perform in the parish church at Axbridge.⁶³ In 1589, an unnamed schoolmaster was fined for presenting plays on Sundays in Lydbury North.⁶⁴ Another schoolmaster, William Evans, was in trouble over the Wells Shows presented in May and June 1607.⁶⁵ The

Star Chamber found Evans guilty of being associated with a libellous Latin oration and put him on a good behaviour bond. Jasper Garnett, a Lancaster schoolmaster, found himself in serious trouble over his authorship of a play staged at Kendal Castle, Westmorland, in 1621 as a protest about border service and threats to abolish tenant rights.⁶⁶ The accusation was that the actors 'did therein make a representacion of Hell and . . . did personate and acte manie Lordes of the Mannors of the said Countie which they did libellouslie and disgracefullie then and there represent to bee in hell to the greate abuse of the said Lordes'.⁶⁷ Garnett denied this, sidestepping the issue by saying that 'what was then acted [. . .] was a representacion of ravens feeing of poore sheepe [. . .] which ravens were compared to [. . .] greedy landlordes & the sheepe to their poore tennantes [. . .] but the same was not intended more against any of the County of westmrlande then against other counties & all in generall'.⁶⁸ This would seem to have been a potentially seditious play, but Garnett was successful both in his defence and in his protest since the 'Star Chamber postponed indefinitely consideration of all criminal offences', removed 'from the dispute all question of border service' and 'confirmed to the tenants their heritable estate'.⁶⁹

Schoolmasters as stage characters

As every schoolchild knows, teachers are fair game. This generality holds true in the late twentieth century as it did in England in the medieval and early modern period. William Fitzstephen (d. 1190), writing of his contemporary London, recorded the behaviour of the schoolboys celebrating the feasts of their institutions' patron saints. On these occasions, the boys of the schools attached to the three principal churches engaged in competitive oratory. These approved demonstrations of rhetorical prowess gave the boys the chance to prove their erudition as they contested the rules of Latin grammar. They also gave them licence to scoff at their teachers 'without mentioning names, with the old Fescennine licentiousness'.⁷⁰

When schoolmasters appeared as characters on the stage, they were likewise figures of fun. Henry Peacham, whose youthful love of painting drew the wrath of his masters, speaks with relish of the dramatic transformation of such tyrants:

in many places, especially in *Italy*, of all professions that of *Pedanteria* is held in basest repute; the Schoole-master almost in every Comedy being brought vpon the Stage, to paralell the *Zani*, or *Pantaloun*. He made vs good sport in that excellent

Comedy of *Pedantius*, acted in our Trinitie Colledge in Cambridge: and [. . .] in [. . .] many of our English Playes.⁷¹

Pedantius (1580/1), an academic Latin comedy by Edward Forcett that parodies the Cambridge scholar, Gabriel Harvey, had, in its own time, a 'national reputation'.⁷² Thomas Nashe, who carried on a battle of pamphlets with Harvey for some years, exulted over this dramatic portrait of 'the concise and firking finicaldo fine Schoolmaster'.⁷³ But, if we are to believe the words of John Harington in 1591, the parody of Harvey in *Pedantius* was not too unkind, for, he says, the play was 'full of harmeles myrth'.⁷⁴

Sir Philip Sidney believed that stage comedy should indeed be harmless and should not be concerned with 'such scornful matters as stir laughter only, but, mixed with it, that delightful teaching which is the end of poesy'.⁷⁵ He scoffed at dramatists who were so degraded as to 'make folks gape at a wretched beggar and a beggarly clown; or [. . .] at strangers, because they speak not English so well as we do' and suggested a short list of characters that were appropriate to comedy. The 'self-wise-seeming schoolmaster' was on his recommended list and he supplied an example of the stage pedagogue in his pageant, *The Lady of May*, presented to Elizabeth I at Wanstead in 1578 or 1579. Master Rombus, a village schoolmaster, comes forward among the rustics to speak to the queen, and, posturing 'with many special graces', begins his 'learned oration':

Now the thunderthumping Jove transfund his dotes into your excellent formosity, which have with your resplendent beams thus segregated the enmity of these rural animals. I am, *Potentissima Domina*, a schoolmaster.⁷⁶

This amusingly exaggerated and confused verbosity, thankfully cut short by the interruption of the Lady May, characterizes Rombus as 'a self-wise-seeming schoolmaster' and, at the same time, like Holofernes' pageant of the Nine Worthies, parodies the tradition of the learned oration in royal entries.

On the stage, as characters, these ancient pedagogues provided audiences with harmless amusement; behind the scenes, in the theatre of civic pageantry, many of them were authors, directors, actors and theatrical entrepreneurs; and in the schoolroom itself, they used drama as a positive educational tool to prepare their young charges for adult life. They saw public performance as a way of promoting themselves and their schools and also, if Jasper Garnett can be taken as representative, saw the power of

theatre in the political arena. Provincial schoolmasters can, then, be seen to have fulfilled an important function in the shaping of the theatrical culture of their time and in their training of generations of Englishmen who were potentially well disposed to drama. As the collection of dramatic records for the Records of Early English Drama series continues into the twenty-first century, this profile could very well expand and give rise to a greater understanding of place of the school and the pedagogue in the history of the English stage.

NOTES

¹ Nicholas Orme suggests a grammar school entrance age of between nine and twelve, *English Schools in the Middle Ages* (London: Methuen, 1973), p. 117. Some students remained at school until age eighteen; see Helen M. Jewell, "The Bringing up of Children in Good Learning and Manners": A Survey of Secular Educational Provision in the North of England, c. 1350-1550', *Northern History*, 18 (1982), 1-25 (p. 7).

² *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, ed. by Paul L. Hughes and James F. Larkin, 2 vols, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1964), I, 350; see also pp. 183; 231; 317.

³ Kenneth Charlton, *Education in Renaissance England* (London: Routledge; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), p. 95.

⁴ A schoolmaster in Battle was censured for encouraging opposition to reforming preachers, see A. F. Leach, 'Schools', in *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: Sussex*, ed. by William Page, 9 vols (London: Constable, 1907), II, 397-440 (p. 397).

⁵ 'The Inherited Tradition: The Legacy of Provincial Drama', in *The Elizabethan Theatre*, XIII, ed. by A. L. Magnusson and C. E. McGee (Toronto: Meany, 1994), pp. 1-25 (p. 9).

⁶ For discussion of the social status of teachers, see Rebecca W. Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching: Early Modern Humanism in Theory and Practice* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 37-40.

⁷ *Aubrey's Brief Lives*, ed. by Oliver Lawson Dick, 3rd edn (London: Secker, 1958; repr. 1960), p. 276.

⁸ S. Schoenbaum, *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 88.

⁹ William Ringler, *Stephen Gosson: A Biographical and Critical Study* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1942; New York: Octagon, 1972), p. 23.

¹⁰ *Stephen Gosson*, p. 38.

¹¹ A. F. Leach, 'Schools', in *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: Hertfordshire* ed. by William Page, 4 vols (London: Constable, 1908), II, 47-102 (p. 63).

¹² See, for example, Michael Shapiro, *Children of the Revels: the Boy Companies of Shakespeare's Time and their Plays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977); and Reavley Gair, *The Children of Paul's: the story of a theatre company, 1553-1608* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

¹³ See, for example, T. H. Vail Motter, *The School Drama in England* (London: Longmans, 1929), pp. 48-65; 202-215.

¹⁴ *The Compleat Gentleman* (London: Constable, 1622; repr. Amsterdam: Da Capo, 1968), p. 22.

¹⁵ *The Compleat Gentleman*, p. 107.

¹⁶ *Histrionastix* by William Prynne, preface by Arthur Freeman (New York and London: Garland, 1974), p. 939.

¹⁷ Howard B. Norland, *Drama in Early Tudor Britain 1485-1558* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p. 106.

¹⁸ *Gesta Abbatum Monasterii Sancti Albani*, ed. by Henry Thomas Riley, 3 vols (London: Longmans, 1867), I, 72-73.

¹⁹ Some commentators have assumed that Geoffrey was teaching in a school at Dunstable at the time of the fire, for example, M. Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and its Background* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 311-12; Catherine B. C. Thomas, 'The Miracle Play at Dunstable', *Modern Language Notes*, 32 (1917), 337-44 (p. 342) argues that Geoffrey did not teach at Dunstable.

²⁰ 'Schools', in *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: Lincolnshire*, ed. by William Page, 2 vols (London: Constable, 1906), II, 421-92 (p. 464).

²¹ 'Schools', in *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: Gloucestershire*, ed. by William Page, 10 vols (London: Constable, 1907), II, 313-448 (p. 368). At the time of writing, Mark Pilkinton's *Records of Early English Drama: Bristol* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997) was at press and full information on the schoolboy theatre company in that town was not available.

²² 'Schools', in *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: Suffolk* ed. by William Page, 2 vols (London: Constable, 1907), II, 301-36 (pp. 326-27).

²³ 'Some English Plays and Players', in *An English Miscellany presented to Dr Furnivall in honour of his seventy-fifth birthday* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1901), pp. 205-34 (p. 220).

²⁴ *Thomas Elyot: The Book named the Governor 1531* (Menston: Scolar, 1970), fol. 19.

²⁵ Thomas Fuller, *The Holy State* (Cambridge: Williams, 1642), p. 111.

²⁶ *The Holy State*, p. 112.

²⁷ *Charles Hoole: A New Discovery of the Old Art of Teaching Schoole 1660* (Menston: Scolar, 1969), p. 142. Hoole taught in Rotheram Free School and a number of private schools.

²⁸ *Index Britanniae Scriptorum: John Bale's Index of British and Other Writers*, ed. by Reginald Lane Poole and Mary Bateson with an introduction by Caroline Brett and James P. Carley (Cambridge: Brewer, 1990), pp. 332-34.

²⁹ See, for example, *Records of Early English Drama: Herefordshire, Worcestershire*, ed. by David N. Klausner (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), p. 394; *Records of Early English Drama: Lancashire*, ed. by David George (Toronto: University of Toronto

Press, 1991), p. 55; and *The Control and Censorship of Caroline Drama: The Records of Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels 1623-73*, ed. by N. W. Bawcutt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 311.

³⁰ In his will, Radcliffe (d. 1559) bequeathed his books to his children (County Record Office, Hertford, DE 4437). The books seem to have disappeared.

³¹ Norland, *Drama in Early Tudor Britain*, p. xxi.

³² *STC* 13811, pp. 278; 87.

³³ *The Vulgaria of John Stanbridge and the Vulgaria of Robert Whittinton*, ed. by Beatrice White, EETS, os 187, (London, 1932), p. 114.

³⁴ *A New Discovery*, p. 142.

³⁵ *A New Discovery*, p. 296.

³⁶ *The Staple of News*, ed. by Anthony Parr (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 189-90 (III. iv. 43-56).

³⁷ A. F. Leach, 'Schools', in *VCH: Lincolnshire*, II, 423.

³⁸ A. F. Leach, 'Schools', in *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: Buckinghamshire*, ed. by William Page, 4 vols (London: Constable, 1908), II, 145-221 (p. 174).

³⁹ A. F. Leach, 'Schools', in *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: Hampshire and the Isle of Wight*, ed. by H. Arthur Doubleday and William Page, 5 vols (London: Constable, 1903), II, 251-408 (p. 312).

⁴⁰ A. F. Leach, 'Schools', in *VCH: Suffolk*, II, 325.

⁴¹ 'Entertainment and the Free School of St Bartholomew, Bristol', *Records of Early English Drama Newsletter*, 13.2 (1988), 9-13 (p. 10).

⁴² 'Entertainment and the Free School', p. 11.

⁴³ *Records of Early English Drama: Norwich 1540-1642*, ed. by David Galloway (Toronto; University of Toronto Press, 1984), includes the accounts of the visit written by Bernard Garter and Thomas Churchyard, pp. 247-330.

⁴⁴ *REED: Norwich*, p. 267.

⁴⁵ *REED: Norwich*, p. 271.

⁴⁶ *Records of Early English Drama: Shropshire*, ed. by J. Alan B. Somerset, 2 vols (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), I, 228-31. Students of the school presented orations for numerous visits by the Lord President, see II, 514-15.

⁴⁷ *REED: Shropshire*, I, 229; 231.

⁴⁸ *REED: Shropshire*, I, 94-104.

⁴⁹ A. F. Leach, 'Schools', in *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: Nottinghamshire*, ed. by William Page, 2 vols (London: Constable, 1910), II, 179-264 (p. 229).

⁵⁰ *Records of Early English Drama: Coventry*, ed. by R. W. Ingram (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), pp. 29-34. Coventry brought out the Worthies again in 1498 for the visit of Prince Arthur, although only 'King Arthur' spoke, pp. 89-91.

⁵¹ *REED: Norwich*, pp. 38-40.

⁵² *REED: Norwich*, p. 45.

⁵³ *REED: Norwich*, p. 52.

⁵⁴ *REED: Norwich*, p. 54.

⁵⁵ *REED: Norwich*, p. 21.

⁵⁶ *REED: Shropshire*, I, 243.

⁵⁷ *REED: Shropshire*, I, 209; 211; 215.

⁵⁸ *REED: Shropshire*, I, 214.

⁵⁹ *REED: Shropshire*, I, 207.

⁶⁰ *Records of Early English Drama: York*, ed. by Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson, 2 vols (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), I, 405.

⁶¹ *Records of Plays and Players in Lincolnshire 1300-1585*, ed. by Stanley J. Kahrl, Malone Society Collections, VIII (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 78; 84.

⁶² See *Records of Early English Drama: Somerset, including Bath*, ed. by James Stokes and Robert J. Alexander, 2 vols (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), I, 12-13; 46; A. F. Leach, 'Schools', in *The Victoria History of the Counties of England: Yorkshire*, ed. by William Page, 3 vols (London: Constable, 1907), I, 415-500 (p. 429); *REED: Shropshire*, I, 83; *Records of Early English Drama: Devon*, ed. by John M. Wasson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), pp. 62; 237; *REED: Lancashire*, pp. 40-41; *Records of Early English Drama: Newcastle Upon Tyne*, ed. by J. J. Anderson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), pp. 133-35; 137; and *REED: Coventry*, pp. 356; 400.

⁶³ *REED: Somerset*, I, 4.

⁶⁴ *REED: Shropshire*, I, 115.

⁶⁵ *REED: Somerset*, I, 292-95.

⁶⁶ *Records of Early English Drama: Cumberland, Westmorland, Gloucestershire*, ed. by Audrey Douglas and Peter Greenfield (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), pp. 188-98.

⁶⁷ *REED: Cumberland, Westmorland, Gloucestershire*, p. 188.

⁶⁸ *REED: Cumberland, Westmorland, Gloucestershire*, p. 197.

⁶⁹ *REED: Cumberland, Westmorland, Gloucestershire*, p. 236.

⁷⁰ *Fitz-Stephen's Description of the City of London: newly translated from the Latin original, with a necessary commentary . . . by an antiquary* (London: White, 1772), p. 32.

⁷¹ *The Compleat Gentleman*, pp. 26-27.

⁷² *Records of Early English Drama: Cambridge*, 2 vols, ed. by Alan H. Nelson

(Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), II, 713.

⁷³ REED: *Cambridge*, II, 849.

⁷⁴ REED: *Cambridge*, II, 847.

⁷⁵ *A Defence of Poetry* (1579-80), in *Miscellaneous Prose of Sir Philip Sidney*, ed. by Katherine Duncan-Jones and Jan Van Dorsten (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 116.

⁷⁶ *Miscellaneous Prose*, p. 23.