

Zeitschrift: SPELL : Swiss papers in English language and literature
Herausgeber: Swiss Association of University Teachers of English
Band: 31 (2015)

Artikel: Shakespeare and Southwark
Autor: Nelson, Alan H.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-583894>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 06.08.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Shakespeare and Southwark

Alan H. Nelson

William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson attended grammar schools, but not universities. Both men were recognized by contemporaries as superior playwrights despite their lack of a university education. While grammar schools trained many a prospective playwright in reading, writing, and oral performance, the very schoolmasters who incorporated dramatic texts and even private dramatic productions into their classrooms, and the parish ministers who stood above them in authority, were often antagonistic to public playhouses and playgoing. Thus the relationship between pedagogy and drama was not inevitably supportive. Evidence for these observations is derived from the archives of St. Saviour's and St. Olave's parishes, Southwark, St. Saviour's being home to the Bankside playhouses and bear-baiting arenas. Additional evidence is extracted from the published works of the same schoolmasters and ministers, and from articles in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004).

While Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights were typically products of both a grammar school and a university, at least two, and arguably the finest – William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson – were the product of a grammar school only (*ODNB*).¹ Grammar schools bore a complex relationship to drama: while they trained many a prospective playwright in reading, writing, and oral performance, the schoolmasters who incorporated classical play-texts and even private dramatic productions into

¹ On the general subject of grammar schools and literacy, see Carlisle, Simon, Watson, and Cressy.

their classrooms, were sometimes enemies of public playhouses and playgoing.

Implicit in any discussion of drama and pedagogy in the Early Modern period must be the King's School in Stratford-upon-Avon. We know the names and characters of the schoolmasters active during Shakespeare's childhood there, and even have contracts outlining their general responsibilities (Baldwin), but neither admissions lists nor the school's rules and orders survive. The more we know about other schools from the same period, therefore, the more we can infer about Stratford's King's School. We may also ask whether the playwright served as an usher in a country school during his "Lost Years," as reported by the Shakespeare "mythos."

Certain references to schools or schooling are incorporated into Shakespeare's plays. The "schoolmaster scene" in *Merry Wives of Windsor* (4.1) is patently a fictionalized version of the author's personal experience. Other pedagogical scenes are the music lesson in *Taming of the Shrew* (3.1), and the French-English lesson in *Henry V* (3.4). All these reveal Shakespeare as a devotee of the schoolboy humor which delights in salacious puns, however unjustified on strict linguistic grounds. To these three plays must be added *Love's Labour's Lost* as a general reflection on Elizabethan education.

Though lacking a university education himself, Shakespeare had direct or indirect connections to the Inns of Court and to Cambridge University. His *Comedy of Errors* was almost certainly performed at Gray's Inn in 1594, his *Twelfth Night* at Middle Temple in 1602. Additionally, his playing company, the King's Men, performed twice annually at the Inner Temple from about 1607 onward (Nelson). Just before and just after the turn of the century, student playwrights of St. John's College, Cambridge, commended Shakespeare by name in various parts of their *Parnassus* trilogy (Leishman, see Index).

Outside the Shakespeare sphere of influence lay Dulwich College, founded by the ex-actor Edward Alleyn, a fine example of an Elizabethan/Jacobean gentleman doing good and achieving immortality by founding a school (ODNB). Alleyn's father-in-law Philip Henslowe was a governor of the Free School of St. Saviour's parish, Southwark, even though his grasp on written English was tenuous, his knowledge of Latin and Greek non-existent (ODNB).

St. Saviour's parish was home to four playhouses – the Rose, the Swan, Shakespeare's Globe, and the Hope – and to a succession of bear-baiting arenas. Lying on the south side of the Thames, this parish, which included Bankside, extended westward from Borough High Street at the

southern foot of London Bridge about two miles up-river as far as Lambeth Marsh. St. Olave's parish extended eastward about the same distance down-river, as far as Bermondsey. Together, St. Saviour's and St. Olave's comprised the entirety of Thames-side Southwark (Rendle). (Two Southwark parishes, St. Thomas's and St. George's, lay south of the Thames). About a quarter of the male population of St. Saviour's parish were watermen, who ferried customers to Bankside; a much smaller but not insignificant number were players or bear-wards (Web-site, under Vocations).

William Shakespeare can be linked to St. Saviour's parish through the Globe playhouse and documents from the legal history of its site (Chambers 2.414-19). His brother Edmund lived and was buried in the parish in 1607: it is reasonably assumed that William paid for Edmund's burial in the church (now Southwark Cathedral), and for the tolling of a bell (*ODNB*, Shakespeare, "Shakespeare and Stratford 1606-1608").

A tenuous connection between Southwark and Stratford-upon-Avon may be claimed on behalf of John Harvard, eponymous benefactor of Harvard College. John was the son of Robert and Katherine Harvard. Robert, a butcher, was a prominent member of St. Saviour's parish, while Katherine was the daughter of Thomas Rogers, yeoman and alderman of Stratford. Thus Harvard University can claim a matrilineal connection through Southwark to Shakespeare's home town. John Harvard's schoolmaster at St. Saviour's would have been Thomas Watkins to 1618, and Humphrey Franke thereafter. The usher, or under-master, was John Davidge, B.A., of Oriel College, Oxford. After grammar school John Harvard attended Emmanuel College, Cambridge, a notably puritan establishment (*ODNB*).

Both St. Saviour's and St. Olave's parishes established free grammar schools in the early years of Elizabeth. The two schools survived in parallel until the mid-1890s, when they were legally conjoined. In 1963 the combined school moved from its home in dense and dirty Southwark to Orpington, Kent, where it now thrives as the Grammar School of St. Olave's and St. Saviour's. Usually called "St. Olave's," it is recognized today as one of the finest grammar schools in England (Carrington).

The modern St. Olave's retains the foundational charters of both schools and the early orders of St. Saviour's school, while the governors' books of both schools and property deeds of St. Olave's are currently held at the Southwark Local History Library on Borough High Street. Each parish preserved vestry books and other documents from the years of greatest interest to early modern theater historians, 1560 to 1640: a minority of these are currently held at the Southwark Local His-

tory Library, a majority at the London Metropolitan Archives in Clerkenwell.

William Ingram of the University of Michigan and I have built a website for St. Saviour's parish, while an independent Canadian scholar, Ian Haste, has joined me in transcribing documents from St. Olave's parish. St. Saviour's documents cited in the course of this essay may be found online (designated as "Website"); references for documents from St. Olave's parish will be given explicitly. My intention in the balance of my essay is to examine relations between the two Southwark grammar schools and local sites of public entertainment.

The Free Grammar School of St. Saviour's parish was founded in 1562 upon a bequest by the wealthy saddler Thomas Cure. While a still earlier school can be traced back to 1540, the school of 1562 had a fresh bequest, a fresh charter, and a new lease on life. The site of the school was ultimately fixed in Chequer Alley, near the foot of London Bridge, on the east side of Borough High Street beneath what is now London Bridge rail station (*Victoria* 174-81). Full transcriptions of the Governors' Book and the parish Vestry Books, giving these and other details, are posted online, along with lists and thumbnail biographies of the schoolmasters and the under-masters, the latter better known as ushers.

The Free Grammar School of St. Olave's parish, founded in 1571, was situated near St. Olave's Church (*Victoria* 181-5). The first Governors' Book covers the years 1571 to 1650; the school is also mentioned in the parish Vestry Book. From these sources we learn that Christopher Ockland, who had served as schoolmaster of St. Saviour's approximately 1562 to 1569, applied for the schoolmastership of St. Olave's in 1571, but, his appointment delayed, withdrew his application in disgust (*ODNB*).

A St. Olave's vestry order of 1566 anticipated a school in which children were to remain

untyll suche tyme that the sayd chylldren can be lerned to rede awrighte [sic: for "& wrighte"] sufficiently tyll they be abell to goo to servyce or ells otherwyse to goo to grammer, as their frindes shall thinke for them moost fetyst [=fittest] at that tyme. (Vestry Book, fol. 29 recto)

The decision as to which children would leave school for service, and which would go into grammar, was to be made, theoretically at least, not by the school but by the friends . . . presumably the parents or sponsors . . . of the child.

Orders of 1571 reveal that pupils entered St. Olave's school from the age of six as "petits" or "readers"; over time they would become "writers" and finally "grammarians" (Governors' Book 3-7). Thus pupils first learned to read (in English); then to write; and finally to read and write in Latin, which requires the mastery of grammar. Pupils were also taught to "cast accomptes, and so to put them forth to prentice."² Grammar school education was essentially free, though St Olave's families were expected to contribute 6d, 8d, and 30d respectively as pupils progressed through the three levels. Families also contributed 20d for rods, brooms, and ink – rather hard to think that pupils had to pay for their own instruments of punishment. Older scholars were expected to arrive by 6 a.m. in the summer, 7 a.m. in the winter, and received stripes for lateness; younger pupils were allowed greater toleration and mercy. Morning sessions continued until 11 a.m., while afternoon sessions lasted from 1 to 5 p.m. Textbooks were to be in conformity with the Church of England and contributory to orthodox beliefs and morals. The schoolmaster and the usher both received £13-6-8 per annum; the schoolmaster was chiefly responsible for the older boys, the usher, for the younger boys. The schoolmaster was allowed to supplement his income by taking up to six private pupils, but was also required to help with the younger boys.

Alternate orders, entered into St. Olave's Vestry Book (fol. 35 verso), reveal that each child was to be provided by his sponsors, not by the school, with books, paper, pen, and ink, and was subject to expulsion for non-compliance, but only after the sponsors had been urged to provide better support. Scholars were to attend church at time of prayer; and were to supply candles for the winter months. Any pupil not from St. Olave's parish was charged 30s, excepting four pupils from St. Saviour's parish, who were admitted gratis. Pupils were to be examined from time to time so the governors could check on their progress; examinations were to be conducted by one or more of the churchwardens, and by the minister.

Orders from 1614 for St. Saviour's, which was less an elementary and more a pure grammar school than St. Olave's, provide detail relevant to play-acting: "the highest forme shall declaim[,] and some of the inferior fourmes act a scene of Terence or some dialogue" (*Victoria* 179).

² St. Olave's Governors' Book, 5. Stowe (106-7) cites references to the teaching of accounting: note 33: "to write and cast accounts, whereby their hands may be directed, and so they trained to write fair hands, and likewise not ignorant in reckoning and accounting"; note 35: "Writing and casting accounts with the pen and counters"; note 36: for "writing and cyphering."

Thus the lower-form grammarians were to act out scenes of Terence, while the top-formers were to perform individual recitations.

It is perhaps in the nature of the governors' books, which focus more on finances than on rules and regulations, that we know more about the school privy than the school classroom, and much more about the school's governors than about the school's pupils. We do learn some details. A 1597 inventory for St. Saviour's school lists, unsurprisingly: "the desk and seats that the children sit on" (Website, Governors' Book). The governors of St. Olave's School were concerned that the school should have enough light, for the health of all concerned; recently-buried bodies in a nearby burial-ground were an annoyance to the masters and pupils alike (Governors' Book 70 verso; 87 verso; 109 verso).

Special concern was expressed for the educational welfare of poor pupils; this concern is expressed more clearly over time, as at St. Saviour's in 1627, when a scholarship given to a son of a minister was declared subject to transfer if a well-qualified but still poorer pupil should come along (Website, Governors' Book 69).

In the parish at large, a close connection obtained between schoolmasters and parish ministers – so close that it was resisted by the bishop of Winchester. Schoolmasters were not to perform ministerial duties; and when the controversial Robert Browne, founder of Brownism (*ODNB*), was appointed schoolmaster at St. Olave's in 1586, he was made to promise: "ffyrste that you shall not entermedle your selfe with the minister or mynestrie of this parrishe" (Governors' Book 10). Nevertheless, ministers, schoolmasters, and ushers were all graduates of Cambridge or Oxford, and all cooperated to prepare gifted boys for admission to the same universities. In several instances the top candidates from St. Saviour's were the sons or nephews of ministers and schoolmasters.³ This tight, recirculatory enterprise put pedagogy at the intellectual center of the parish.

A mystery with Southwark as with Stratford-upon-Avon is why so few pupils are recorded on the admissions registers of Cambridge and Oxford colleges, or in university matriculation books. It is easier to trace admissions now that admissions lists for Cambridge and Oxford are online (Venn, Foster). A search for "Southwark" or "Stratford" as "Location" will result in some, but not many, hits. In the same vein, the col-

³ Mark Franke was the son of Humphrey Franke, schoolmaster 1618-37, while Benjamin Archer may have been a son and Ferdinand Archer was apparently a nephew of James Archer, minister 1614-41: see Website, under "Schoolmasters" and "Ministers."

leges and universities of only about half of all ministers, schoolmasters, and ushers of St. Saviour's parish are known, even though all were university-educated (Website, Ministers and Preachers; Schoolmasters and Ushers). One explanation is that the registers of many of the colleges are incomplete or missing for early years; also, many students avoided matriculation, some for reasons of conscience, as famously with John Donne (ODNB).

Many ministers and schoolmasters of Southwark parishes attended puritan colleges, including Christ's College and Emmanuel College, Cambridge, and Magdalen Hall, Oxford. A brief survey of the careers and published writings of these parish officers reveals a high degree of intellectual achievement, along with an inclination to puritanism and corresponding attitudes toward public entertainment.⁴ (To forestall confusion it is necessary to understand that St. Saviour's was authorized to have two ministers, neither of whom was superior to the other; so the tenures of the two ministers often overlapped).

Christopher Ockland (Ocland), probably born in the 1540s, schoolmaster of St. Saviour's 1563-69, was author of *Anglorum proelia* ("Battles of the English"), first published in 1580. Ockland's Latin poem traces English history from Edward III to the death of Mary in 1558. Ockland's poem went through seven editions to 1582, John Sharrock's translation into English was published in 1585, and a final Latin edition was published in 1680. Ockland published Latin poems in praise of Elizabeth, and an anti-Catholic tract entitled *The Fountaine and Welspring of all variance, sedition, and deadlie hate* (1589). In several of his titles Ockland explicitly associates himself with the schools of Southwark and of Cheltenham. "Christopher Ocland's is a sizeable œuvre that should not be overlooked. He was one of a number of schoolmaster Latin authors of the sixteenth century, but his importance stems from the high regard in which his historical verse was held, and for its long-lasting influence" (ODNB).

Robert Crowley, born about 1519, and thus from the truly distant past, schoolmaster of St. Saviour's 1569-71, was both an author and a printer. From about 1547 to 1588 he published some twenty titles. In his *31 Epigrams* (1550), Crowley inveighed against bear-baitings at Paris

⁴ Information cited below for individuals from Christopher Ockland to Thomas Sutton, gathered in the St. Saviour's Website under "Ministers" and "Schoolmasters," derives from documents cited on the same website, supplemented by ODNB, Foster, and Venn, while information on publications is extracted from the *Short Title Catalogue* (see *References*).

Garden. A modern admirer calls him “the most significant poet between Surrey and Gascoyne” (ODNB).

Thomas Brasbridge, schoolmaster of St. Saviour’s 1573–80, also a preacher and a practitioner of medicine, was born in 1536/7. Brasbridge published *Abdias the Prophet* (1574), based on a sermon given in Oxford; three editions of a commentary on the plague entitled *The Poor Man’s Jewel* (1578 to 1592), praising the herb *Carduus Benedictus*; and a schoolmasterly commentary on Cicero’s *Offices* (1586, 1592). Brasbridge was a man of puritan tendencies who in his post-Southwark years fought openly with Sir John Danvers of Banbury: on one occasion two of Danvers’s daughters attacked Brasbridge with their fists and with knives. Brasbridge was an enemy of maypoles, while Danvers seems to have been an embodiment of “Merry old England” . . . with fierce daughters.⁵

Thomas Ratcliffe, minister of St. Saviour’s 1585–99, was author of *A Short Summe of the Whole Catechisme . . . for the greater ease of the common people and Children of Saint Saveries in South-warke. First gathered by Mr. Thomas Ratcliffe Minister of Gods word in Saint Saveries in South-warke*. Published posthumously in 1619, the imprint carries a dedication signed “in South-warke the 22. of October Anno 1592.”

Ratcliffe’s tenure as minister overlapped with that of Edward Phillips, who served from 1588 to 1601/2. Henry Yelverton, a puritan lawyer, published Phillips’s sermons in 1605 under the informative title: *Certaine godly and learned sermons: preached by that worthy servant of Christ M. Ed. Philips, as they were deliuered by him in Saint Sauiors in Southwarke. And were taken by the pen of H. Yeluertion of Grayes Inne Gentleman, London: Printed by Richard Field for Cuthbert Burbie, and are to be sold at his shop in Paules church-yard at the signe of the Swanne, 1605*.

Richard Field was William Shakespeare’s countryman and printer/publisher of *Venus and Adonis* (1593) and *Rape of Lucrece* (1594). A second edition of Phillips’s sermons was published in 1607.

A Thomas Rawlings, professor of both medicines, was author of a medical treatise entitled *Admonitio pseudo-chymicis* (1610?). While it may seem unlikely that this was the Thomas Rawlings who served as schoolmaster of St. Saviour’s in 1582, his profession may explain a mysterious injunction in the 1614 school orders, that the schoolmaster was “not to practize physick” (*Victoria*, 179). Perhaps the school had had it

⁵ The Banbury story occurs in The National Archives (Kew), SP 12/223/47. I am grateful to Alexandra F. Johnston for this reference.

with the likes of Brasbridge and Rawlings, both of whom did “practize physick.”

Thomas Sutton, minister of St. Saviour’s 1614/15 to 1623, appeared much too late to have had any direct influence on Shakespeare; Sutton’s story nevertheless has Shakespeare connections. Born 1584/5, and thus Shakespeare’s junior by about twenty years, Sutton matriculated from Queen’s College, Oxford, in 1602. Having gained a reputation for his “smooth and edifying way of preaching,” Sutton preached at Paul’s Cross, London, 3 January 1612/13, denouncing the theater, usury, adultery, and corrupt lawyers. Published under the title *Englands Summons* (1613), Sutton’s sermon provoked a reply from Shakespeare’s fellow actor Nathan Field, “who argued that the Bible does not condemn acting and that Sutton’s criticism was disloyal because the king patronized the theatre.” Field’s response, which circulated in manuscript, not in print, was finally published in the nineteenth century (Halliwell). Sutton preached at Paul’s Cross again in 1616, publishing his sermon as *Englands Second Summons*: his target was Catholic polemicists, as he called on magistrates to “loppe and prune the corrupt and rotten branches, that infect and pester the Land, [and] to cut off the trayterous heads of Priests and Jesuites.” This was the first of many such attacks, the last occurring in June 1623. On 24 August of that same year, Sutton, having travelled north to his home town of Bampton on behalf of a free school he had helped to found there, was shipwrecked and drowned on his return to London by sea. His death provoked a response from the Jesuit priest Robert Drury, “who reportedly gloated that the sea had claimed Sutton because ‘he was not worthy the earth should receive him.’” On 23 October Drury was preaching at Blackfriars hall when the floor collapsed, sending him and about 40 of his auditors to their deaths. The incident provoked a number of pamphlets, including one by Thomas Goad: *The dolefull euen-song, or A true, particular and impartiall narration of that fearefull and sudden calamity, which befell the preacher Mr. Drury a Iesuite, and the greater part of his auditory, by the downefall of the floore at an assembly in the Black-Friers on Sunday the 26. of Octob. last, in the after noone Together with the rehearsall of Master Drurie his text, and the diuision thereof, as also an exact catalogue of the names of such as perished by this lamentable accident: and a briefe application thereupon.*

This mass death of Catholics was, in the words of the dedication, one of “Gods extraordinary workes.” First among the slain, as listed in the “exact catalogue,” was “Master Drewrie the Priest.” It is impossible to overlook the fact that the Blackfriars gatehouse was purchased in 1613 by William Shakespeare, though he had apparently disposed of it

by the time of his death in 1616 (ODNB, Shakespeare, “The Last Years”).

The succession of highly literate and highly Latinate schoolmasters in the early years of St. Saviour’s school is reminiscent of Stratford, where the schoolmaster and Latinist John Brunswerd taught while Shakespeare was an infant (ODNB). Brunswerd, explicitly commended in *Ludus Literarius, or the Grammar Schole* (1612), by John Brinsley (ODNB), exemplifies the excellence and overqualification a schoolboy might easily discover in an Elizabethan schoolmaster.

A wider study of ushers might provide context for the assumption that William Shakespeare could have served, with merely a grammar school education, as an usher in a country school (ODNB, Shakespeare, “After School, and Marriage”). That would not have happened in the suburban parishes of St. Saviour’s or St. Olave’s, not only as a matter of policy, but because of the dire employment prospects for university graduates under Elizabeth and James. As today, numerous candidates applied for any open position; young men, some recently married, were desperate for employment. In February 1617/18, for example, seven candidates vied for the position of schoolmaster of St. Saviour’s; in 1638 the governors gave £4 for the “better relief” of a candidate who had been hired only to be rejected by the Bishop of Winchester (Website, Governors’ Book 46, 85).

No schoolmaster or minister of St. Saviour’s was as radical as Robert Browne, appointed schoolmaster of St. Olave’s in 1586 (ODNB). Nevertheless, as noted, Robert Crowley explicitly attacked bear-baiting, Thomas Brasbridge was an enemy of maypoles, while Thomas Sutton attacked playhouses and players. It is no wonder, then, to discover the St. Saviour’s vestry challenging the very existence of professional plays and playhouses within the parish. The date is 19 July 1598:

Imprimis it was ordered at this Vestry that a petition shall be made to the body of the Council concerning the playhouses in this parish, wherein the enormities shall be showed that comes thereby to the parish. And that, in respect thereof they may be dismissed and put down from playing. And that four or two of the churchwardens, Mr. Howse, Mr. Garlonde, Mr. John Payne, Mr. Humble, or two of them, and Mr. Russell and Mr. Ironmonger or one of them, shall present the cause with the collector of the Borough-side and another of the Bankside. (Website, Vestry Book)

The parish ministers at this time were Edward Phillips and Thomas Ratcliffe. Maybe this petition was meant to stave off the construction of

the Globe Theatre. If so, it was unsuccessful. On 28 March 1600 the same Vestry moved to extract funds from the players' "enormities":

Item it is ordered that the churchwardens shall talk with the players for tithes for their playhouses and for the rest of the new tan-houses near thereabouts within the liberty of the Clink and for money for the poor according to the order taken before my lords of Canterbury, London, and Master of the Revels.

In effect, enormities would be tolerated, so long as they paid taxes.

Another sign of an accommodation between the parish and its playhouses was the incorporation of Philip Henslowe and his son-in-law Edward Alleyn into St. Saviour's Vestry. Henslowe was appointed vestryman on 8 July 1607, and one of the six school governors on 22 January 1609/10 (Website, Vestry Book, Governors' Book), while Alleyn was appointed vestryman on 2 March 1607/8 (Website, Vestry Book).

It is traditional for scholars to discuss drama and pedagogy as if each was "a Good Thing," and as if together they were "a Very Good Thing."⁶ Pedagogy was good to a degree, obviously: the instruction in writing, reading, and grammar experienced by Shakespeare in Stratford, including the Latin lesson created by memory and imagination in *Merry Wives of Windsor*, gave him access to literary sources and models for his comedies, histories, and tragedies. What we learn about the grammar schools of Southwark may lead us to appreciate, by analogy, that Shakespeare likely attended grammar school from the age of 6 to the age at which other boys were preparing for admission to Cambridge or Oxford, and that he likely joined in performances of Terence (in Latin). Nicholas Rowe (1709) was evidently the first biographer to suggest that financial reverses of Shakespeare's father would have jeopardized William's attendance at the King's School: "the want of his assistance at Home, forc'd his father to withdraw him from thence" (Honan 43, 58). But there is no evidence for Rowe's conjecture, and it must always be remembered that free grammar schools were intended primarily for the poor, not for the rich.⁷

Grammar-school teachers who were well-educated themselves, and allowed or encouraged the performance of Terence in their classrooms,

⁶ I allude to W. C. Sellar and R. J. Yeatman, *1066 and All That: A Memorable History of England, Comprising All the Parts You Can Remember, Including 103 Good Things, 5 Bad Kings and 2 Genuine Dates* (London: Methuen and Co., 1930).

⁷ A search for the word "poor" in St. Saviour's Governors' Book (Website) will reveal many instances of selective benefits given to poor boys.

often looked on professional plays, players, and playhouses as promoters of social and moral “enormities.” That puritans might even inveigh against schoolmasters who stage plays is evident in an admittedly fictional complaint from the character Censure in *Staple of News*, written by Ben Jonson about 1625:

. . . An there were no wiser than I, I would have ne’er a cunning schoolmaster in England . . . They make all their scholars play-boys! 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 play-books. . . . I hope Zeal-of-the-Land Busy and my gossip Rabbi Troubletruth will start up and see we have painful good ministers to keep school and catechise our youth, and not to teach ’em to speak plays and act fables of false newes in this manner, to the super-vexation of town and country . . . (Jonson 6.108)

Ben Jonson and William Shakespeare, both ex-grammarians, profited from pedagogy without being diverted or stifled by it. In the words of the character William Kempe, in conversation with the character Richard Burbage, in the Cantabrigian *Return from Parnassus* (1605-6):

Few of the uniuersity men pen plays well, they smell too much of that writer Ovid, and that writer Metamorphoses, and talk too much of Proserpina and Jupiter: why here’s our fellow Shakespeare puts them all down, aye, and Ben Jonson too. (Leishman 337)⁸

⁸ I have modernized the text. It is unclear whether Ben Jonson joins Shakespeare in putting down all other playwrights, or whether he is also put down by Shakespeare.

References

- Baldwin, T. W. *William Shakspeare's Small Latine & Lesse Greeke*, 2 vols. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1944.
- Bankside (the Parishes of St. Saviour and Christchurch Southwark)*, Survey of London, vol. 22. London: London County Council, 1950.
- Carlisle, Nicholas. *A Concise Description of the Endowed Grammar Schools in England and Wales*, 2 vols. London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1818.
- Carrington, R. C. *Two Schools: A History of St. Olave's and St. Saviour's Grammar School Foundation*. London: privately printed, 1971.
- Chambers, Edmund K. *Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923.
- Cressy, David. *Literacy and Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- Foster, Joseph. *Alumni Oxonienses: the Members of the University of Oxford, 1500-1714*. Oxford and London: Parker and company, 1891-92. See also website below.
- Halliwell, James Orchard, ed. *The Remonstrance of N.F. . . addressed to a Preacher in Southwark, who had been arraigning against the Players at the Globe Theatre, in the year 1616. Now first edited from the original manuscript* [TNA: SP SP 14/89/210]. London: privately printed, 1865.
- Jonson, Benjamin. *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, ed. David Bevington *et al.*, 7 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Leishman, J. B. *The Three Parnassus Plays (1598-1601)*. London: Nicholson and Watson, 1949.
- Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. Cited throughout as ODNB. See also website below.
- Records of Early English Drama: Inns of Court*. Alan H. Nelson and John R. Elliott, eds. 3 vols. Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010.
- Rendle, William. *Old Southwark and its People*. London, 1878.
- Shakespeare, William. *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 2nd ed., G. Blakemore Evans, gen. ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997.
- A Short-title Catalogue of Books Printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland, . . . 1475-1640* compiled by A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, 2nd edition completed by Katharine F. Pantzer, 3 vols. London: Bibliographical Society, 1976-91.
- Simon, Joan. *Education and Society in Tudor England*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966.
- Stowe, A. Monroe. *English Grammar Schools in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1908.

- Venn, John, and John Archibald Venn. *Alumni Cantabrigienses: A Biographical List of All Known Students, Graduates, and Holders of Office at the University of Cambridge, from the Earliest Times to 1751*. 4 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922-27. See also website below.
- Victoria History of the County of Surrey*, vol. 2. London: Victoria County History, 1905.
- Watson, Foster. *The English Grammar Schools to 1660*. New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1970.

Manuscripts (see also St. Saviour's Website below)

St. Olave's School Governors' Book (SO/I/1/1)

St. Olave's Vestry Book (SO/I/1/2)

Websites

Foster: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/source.aspx?pubid=1270>

ODNB: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/>

St Saviour's Website: <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~ingram/StSaviour/> (Alternatively, a link is provided on the website of the London Metropolitan Archives, Clerkenwell, London)

Venn: <http://venn.lib.cam.ac.uk/Documents/acad/index.html/>