Early in the sixteenth century, an Oxford schoolmaster gave his pupils the following passage and its Latin translation to commit to memory and recite on demand:

This boye playd the lord yester-day a-mong his companyonce, apoyntyng euery man his office. Oon he mayd his carver, an-other his butlere, an-other his porter, an-other bi-cause he wold not do as he commandyd hym he toke and [made] all to bete hym, and to make and ende at few wordes, lykewyse as Cyrus pleyd oons they kyang of boyes so he begane to play the kyang of his companiouns, how be it I trow in an un-lyke chaunce, for as cyrus was a noble man borne and at the last he came to the riallthe [royalty] of a kyang in veri dede, but as for this [he] is a knawe borne and be lykelyhode wyll play the knawe all the remnant of his lyffe, except he mend his vnhappy maners betyme.\(^1\)

Though the tone is admonitory, the details acknowledge an effective performance by the boy who plays the king. And though the passage makes a distinction between “a nobleman borne” and “a knave borne,” it includes the possibility that the born knave, if “he mend his vnhappy maners,” may hope to play a higher part. In reciting such passages, a schoolboy learned to regard social rank as the performance of roles, and also to aspire to play a role higher than the one to which he was born.

English schoolmasters wrote school dialogues to support the teaching of Latin grammar and speaking long before this one was written. Aelfric of Eynsham and his student Aelfric Bata composed lively colloquies for their monastery schools around the year 1000, and they seem to have been working from an even older tradition.\(^2\) From the fifteenth century we have several collections of schoolroom exercises that interpolate colloquial English and Latin phrases, and that came to be called “vulgars” or vulgaria. Nicholas Orme has defined these as “English sentences which illustrated the rules of grammar in operation and which the pupils were made to translate into Latin as a means of practicing their composition.”\(^3\) The translation of the vulgars into
Latin was called “making Latins,” and by 1530 it formed a great part of the daily routine in the grammar schools of England.

As Orme explains, many of the vulgars drew their appeal from “the everyday life of children, their humour, pleasures, problems, and emotions,” though “the schoolmaster’s chief purpose, as many other passages in his vulgaria make clear, was not only to sympathize with the child he portrayed but to censure and instruct him.” Orme, who has studied the vulgaria more extensively than any contemporary scholar, notes both the disciplinary and the liberating purposes of these texts, and the value of the vulgaria as ethnographic records of late medieval children. Other historians have stressed the regulatory and normative uses of the vulgaria, often in the context of a critique of early modern humanism. Here I want to emphasize instead their subversive potential, their capacity to destabilize structures of hereditary rank and traditional authority and to promote self-assertion. I argue that the use of vulgaria in early Tudor grammar schools linked literary instruction and schoolroom performance as rehearsals for social self-advancement. Such advancement was, after all, the main business of grammar schools in which the majority of boys were not the sons of gentlemen. These playful grammar exercises required acts of impersonation in a broad variety of social roles and promulgated a strange mix of cultural discipline and social license.

The vulgaria provided scripts for pupils to speak from memory in two languages, sometimes in the roles of quailing schoolboys but also in the personae of plaintive sluggards, sportive youth, bragging rascals, railing schoolmasters, prosperous burghers, and imperious men of parts. The multivocal quality of these lessons inculcated from an early age a capacity to suspend and refashion identity with Protean alacrity. The shape-changing occasioned by the exercises reflected in part the slippery status of the schoolmasters who wrote them: poorly paid masters who might, for a time, lord it over the sons of their employers. The authors of the vulgaria were learned men whose language skills sometimes brought them inside the houses and councils of the great, but marked them nonetheless as hired clerks. Such authors had strong motives and ready means to model both obedience and ambition for pupils destined for clerkships of their own. We must be duly impressed with the oppressive violence and the jockeying for patronage expressed in the texts, but I suggest here that these exercises also regularly provided impressive scripts for resistance and audacious self-assertion.
Though the composition of manuscript *vulgaria* predates the rise of humanism in England by several decades at least, early humanist schoolmasters produced the first printed collections, presumably edited from their own classroom materials. These homegrown vulgars served the Erasmian purpose of replacing grammar drills with playful, mimetic conversation. They were widely employed in the first three decades of the sixteenth century. Consequently recent readers of the *vulgaria* have embedded them in the debate over humanist motives and practices, stirred by Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine’s proposition that humanist educators succeeded not by producing models of virtue but by training up compliant clerks for early modern despotisms. Where Grafton and Jardine focus their criticisms on Italian humanist teaching, Jonathan Goldberg and Richard Halpern find in English pedagogical texts convincing evidence of humanist collusion with the new Tudor ruling class, especially in the emphasis on rhetoric and manners as equipment to police the barrier between the gentle and the vulgar. Goldberg, in his study of the uses of writing as an instrument of cultural dominion in the English Renaissance, finds a mixed pattern of “extensions and exclusions” in the spread of humanist schooling, and he cautiously concludes: “Extensions of literacy redefine, but do not abolish, structures of class.” Halpern reads the *vulgaria* as implementing an Erasmian pedagogy that elicited a Foucauldian docility, bringing “the schooled subject to desire his own ideological subordination” by replacing a punitive, “juridical” model of teaching with a persuasive, “civil” model. While these two readers note liberating impulses in Tudor pedagogic texts, they both ultimately align their readings with a narrative of cultural aggression, if not outright oppression, by the rising burgher élite. In such a view the rich, multivocal variety of the *vulgaria* presents at best an example of what Halpern calls an “empty heterogeneity.”

Alan Stewart’s reading of the *vulgaria* places them even more plainly in a narrative of humanist collaboration in the impressment of boys into a despotic power structure. Stewart reads the *vulgaria* as records of ritualized power transactions, “acts of institution” (in Pierre Bourdieu’s phrase) that carried a deeply ambiguous valence: they made a man of the boy even as they unmanned him, consecrated him as a member of a learned élite while marking him as the subject of a mere schoolmaster’s brutal (and perhaps sodomitical) tyranny. In this reading, schoolmasters recorded in the *vulgaria* experiences of classroom discipline in order to enhance their own status in a sensational way, implicating education itself and the material benefits of education...
within the erotic economy of beating.”12 It is indeed striking that some of the strongest evidence of the schoolmasters’ cruelty and of their despised status comes from their own pens, and these vulgaria offer important perspectives for a social history of early modern schoolroom violence and its relation to the practice and perception of sodomy. But such a focus necessarily neglects the diverse range of voices heard in the vulgaria, and also their fundamentally dramatic nature.

The authoritarian aspects of humanism in Tudor England are inescapable and impressive. Tudor dynasts built prestige by identification with the New Learning, and humanist schools provided a convenient apparatus to distinguish a new ruling élite by their use of freshly classicized Latin. Certainly those Latin lessons prepared boys for clerkly occupations. But to evaluate English humanist schooling primarily on the basis of its dynastic and regulatory functions is to reckon without the remarkable ludic spirit and dramatic polyphony voiced in the daily recitations of Tudor schoolboys. Many vulgaria glamorize schoolroom punishment, and others ventriloquize devotion to learning Latin as a way to rise in the world. Many others, however, express delight in delinquency, triumph in play, and frustration with the constraints of rank and privilege.

Indeed, the printing history of the vulgaria shows their persistent popularity from 1483 to 1560, indicating an efficacy in the classroom that violence alone could not produce.13 Furthermore, the vulgars stimulated authorial controversies, in the Bellum Grammaticale between William Horman and Robert Whittinton and their partisans around 1520, and later in the vituperations of Roger Ascham against “such beggarly gatherings as Horman, Whittinton, and other like vulgars,” demonstrating that the vulgaria held sway over imaginations at some influential level.14 I suggest that the power of these exercises came from the rich variety of vocabulary, thematic content, and tone that in even the barest of the vulgaria collections must be seen to present, not an “empty heterogeneity” but an array of borrowed experiences full of genuine possibility for self-fashioning. The labor of translating, memorizing, and reciting involved the powerful liberating dynamic implicit in the nature of playing roles, in the impersonation of authority by the boys themselves, and in the study of classical literary models of irreverence for authority. By employing many points of view for the rehearsal of literary Latin in a colloquial manner, these lessons in fact introduce a social heterogeneity that destabilizes the supposed orthodoxy of institutional purpose at every turn.
In reading about the boy who played the king and ordered his minions to beat the recalcitrant schoolfellow, for example, we do well to imagine the recitation of this passage in the schoolroom: tempting as it may be to read the passage as evidence that boys learned the ways of tyranny from hard masters, the schoolmaster who scripted this performance delivers much more than a warning against overreaching. He has folded into the narrative the thrill of domination and the threat of gang violence, and also the loneliness of resistance in the boy who would not do the tyrant’s bidding. Moreover, the author frames the tale with a moral interpretation that acknowledges both the claims of noble birth and the chance of advancement through the mending of manners. The student who recited this passage performed the roles of both dominus and discipulus, the subject and the object of authoritarian discipline. He spoke before an audience who had been set to learn the same passage, and who therefore heard his recitation as potential performers themselves. Such schoolroom performances must often have summoned up yet another kind of dramatic tension, between the performer and the piece performed, as when a boy known to be timid and diligent was called on to recite the part of a sullen slacker, or the dullard to speak the part of the rising star. As I show in the examples below, the vulgaria set up vitally engaging tensions along widely different axes, as between failure and success, harsh realities and bright ideals, drudgery and fun.

The eleven collections from which I draw my examples were produced between 1420 and 1530. The earliest of these model the practice of recitation non in propria persona and express the broad range of concerns that persists in the Tudor vulgaria: beating and other rigors of school, the vagaries of rank and service, the pleasures of holidays and feasting. For example, in 1434 a Suffolk schoolmaster had his schoolboys learn such sentences as, “myn ars coming to scole xal be betyn,” and “J have drunkyn to-day many dyvers alis.” Although the thematic continuities from the early fifteenth century are remarkable, I emphasize here the early Tudor collections that coincide with the growth of English humanism in powerful grammar schools such as Eton, Winchester, St. Paul’s, and Westminster School. We can assume that the vulgaria were first composed by schoolmasters as expedients to leaven classroom tedium and engage student interest in Latin conversation. As the collections grew to include details of social and cultural life, they came to include as well an array of social attitudes, by turns compliant and resistant, pious and irreverent, authoritarian and even deviant. Schoolmasters’ collections were printed
and so spread, and by 1530 the translation of homegrown vulgaria filled much of classroom routine, as I explain below. Under pressure from the humanist emphasis on classical texts, however, the schoolmasters’ vulgaria competed with and were eventually supplanted by colloquial phrasebooks taken from Terence, in particular Nicholas Udall’s Floures for Latine Spekyng (1533).

How teachers actually deployed the vulgaria collections in the classroom remains a matter of some speculation, though we have substantial information from school timetables and from the vulgaria themselves. In the Winchester timetables of 1530, the making of Latins or vulgars is prescribed for every form, particularly as a way of putting a new verb to use in various ways. Fourth form students, for example, “hath a verbe providyd ageyne vij of the ye Clok when the Scholem[aster]r comyth in. And hase the verbe examined among them with vulgares upon the same. And after they write the laten that one of them shall make by ye assynynge of the master. And the master construyth to them a portion of Terence.” In the afternoon the boys construed and parsed the morning’s Terence, “and after renderith rules & then there latyn. This contynewith tyll friday.” Saturdays seem to have been reserved for review and examination, as in the fifth form where boys recited the week’s verses “withowte boke” and submitted to “the examynatyon of the same with rendering of there latyns.” While the fourth form spent half the day on Terence and “Tullies paradoxes,” the first form studied the distychs of Cato, the second Aesop, the third “lucyans dialogs,” and the fifth “Vergills Eglogs” and “tullies epistles.” The Latins or vulgars, as exercises for new vocabulary and grammar, seem to have occupied about as much of the schoolboy’s week as the study of classical literature. A similar pattern obtains in the Eton timetables of the same year. Boys practiced the translation of “Latynys fower tymys in the weke” in the second form and “Latyns twies every weke” in the fourth. All the boys spent their Saturday mornings reciting from the week’s verses (Cato, Propertius, Vergil), and “the after none repetyng of laytns & vulgars lernyd that weke.” At Westminster School in 1560, pupils were to write out the daily “vulguses” in the morning, “and next day they shall say it in order by heart, before or about 9 o’clock.”

We do not know if the vulgaria mentioned in the school timetables came from printed collections or from the schoolmasters on the spot. None of the printed collections offer convenient lists of phrases that ring changes “upon” a single verb, as suggested in the Winchester timetable. Certain passages in the Tudor vulgaria themselves confirm, however, that boys took down the English vulgars as dictation, then
wrote Latin translations, and then memorized them to be recited aloud on demand when the master “apposed” or examined them in class. A passage from the Vulgaria (1519) of John Stanbridge gives a sharp sense of the performance anxiety that a boy experienced when called on to recite: “It is evyll with vs whan the mayster apposeth vs. Male nobiscum est cum preceptor examinat nos.”

That “evyll” moment of forced performance arguably belongs not only to the history of English schooling, but also to the history of early modern English drama. If we take the Vulgaria as reliable records of what the schoolmasters asked the boys to perform at such moments, we must conclude that this pedagogy of social conditioning constituted a rudimentary form of school drama, the performance of scripted impersonations. Often the passages cast schoolboys as schoolboys speaking of familiar things, including the profits of learning, the competitive anxieties of reciting, and the constant threat of flogging. We must remember, however, that these scripted schoolboys were not the reciters themselves but pupils as imagined by their schoolmaster, himself dreaming of profiting by their success in adult roles that expressed the ambitions of other adults in their lives. Thus schoolboys tried on the manners of gentlemen, the powers of magistrates, and even, as we have seen, the borrowed robes of kings, sometimes in earnest and sometimes in playful contexts.

To be sure, many Vulgaria dutifully assert a causal relation between a literary education in Latin and the solid profits of social advancement. One manuscript collection, probably from Magdalen College Grammar School in the 1490s, casts the pupil in the role of proselytizer for the New Learning when he recites: “Iff ye knew, Childe, what conseittes were in latyn tonge, what fettes, what knakkes, truly your stomake wolde be choraggyde with a new desir or affeccyn to lurne. . . . In this is property, in this is shyfte, in this all swetnes.” Another makes explicit connections between learning, virtue, and worldly advancement for a poor scholar: “It is a syngyler solace vnto a man / whiche though he be poore of worldly substanсе: yet he is ryche in vertue / or connynge. / For vertue and connyng (as it is dayly proued) maketh many poore of substanсе / ryche in possessions at length.” This theme rings throughout the Vulgaria collections, and situates them securely in the meritocratic ferment of early Tudor England. The venerable Horman, master at Winchester and at Eton, is perhaps most explicit: his pupils learned to intone, “Without lernyng thou canst never com to any honorable roume in the cyte.”

Paul Sullivan 185
Just as the vulgaria advertise that the path to civic glory leads through the rigors of Latin grammar, they baldly assert that the journey upward begins with submission to the master’s authority. Many passages remind the pupil that he is likely to be beaten brutally along the way, and these have attracted the attention of recent readers as I have noted. In many such passages, the schoolmasters who delivered the stripes voice a weird mix of threat, sympathy, and exhortation to stoical endurance. It is possible to hear both lamentation and boasting as students translate, “I was beten this mornynge. The mayster hath bete me” and “[t]he mayster gave me a blowe on the cheke.” Other lines create a grim role for the loser in the game of school: “I am the worst of all my fellows. My minde is not set to my boke”; “I fere the mayster”; “I am wery of study. I am wery of life.” These take on a particular poignancy read alongside the declaration in the same collection, “I am seven yere olde.”

Several passages oblige the student translator to assume the voice of the punitive master, whether to instill the habit of authority, or just to vent the schoolmaster’s own frustrations. So one boy recites, “Thou arte worthy to be bette,” and another, in the bizarre patois of the schoolroom, threatens, “I shall mary my daughter to the.” Beatrice White identifies this image of marrying the schoolmaster’s daughter as “a euphemistic term for flogging.” One sequence of sentences develops this motif in lurid detail:

I maryed my maysters daughter to daye full soore again my wyll. Me thynketh her so roughe and / soore a huswyfe that I cared not & she were brend in hote coles. She embraseth or enhaunseth me so that the prynt of her stykketh vpon my buttokkes a good whyle after.

The sadistic eroticism of such sentences, used here to teach the active and passive senses of the deponent verb complector, may also have introduced some welcome levity, especially in the image of incinerating the cruel daughter. Yet it also has the curious effect of undermining the schoolmaster’s authority. Stewart reads the passage as evidence of the teacher’s participation in “the economy of the male kinship structure, in which women are exchanged between men.” Stewart also notes that marriage to the schoolmaster’s daughter is “an association that would be more advantageous to the impoverished schoolmaster than to the privileged boy enjoying a Latin education.” I would emphasize that the idea of marriage to a schoolmaster’s daughter as a form of humiliation points reflexively to the hard reality of the master’s own place in society. Though the vulgaria often cast boys in the role of
schoolmaster, the master himself sends bitter signals that his is not the kind of authority to which the boys should aspire.

Indeed, the strangest of the vulgaria lay bare the power of schoolroom violence to exact the worship of the oppressed on the one hand, and to stimulate dreams of armed resistance on the other. Whittinton's collection includes a chilling dramatic dialogue in which flogging is characterized by one boy as a nourishing meal for a frightened fellow pupil:

—What maketh the loke so sad.
—I am thus sadde for fere of the rodde and the brekefaste that my mayster promest me.
—Be of good chere man / I sawe right now a rodde made of wythe / for the: garnysshed with knottes. It wolde do a boye good to loke vpon it. Take thy medicine (though it be somewhat bytter) with a good wyll it wyll worke to thy ease at length.35

Here we can catch the scent of the prefect system with all its insidious power to make tyrants of little boys. Yet this same schoolmaster had his students recite the revenge fantasies he invented for a brutalized pupil: "My mayster hath bette my bak and side / whyles the rodde wolde holde in his hande. He hath torn my buttockes. So that theyr is lefte noo hole skynne upon them. / If euer I be a man / I wyll reuenge his malice."36 The author here enters into the puerile imagination to reflect on the consequences of violence if schooling succeeds in helping the boy to rise and indeed to exceed the status of his schoolmaster: as a boy can imagine himself to be a king ordering his own resistant servants to be beaten, he can just as readily envision himself as a man taking revenge on the schoolmaster who tormented him. While this curriculum clearly teaches terror of the rod, it likewise teaches the boy to aspire to seize the rod himself.

Humanist theorists usually deplored the use of flogging, and Horman's vulgaria for his Eton boys include the observation, "A dogged mynde is worse for betynge."37 Nonetheless we know that flogging continued in English schools, even as a proudly mythologized ritual. Indeed, the most violent vulgaria seem also to have been the best sellers.38 Perhaps coincidentally, the collections that feature the most brutality seem also to value a defiant spirit over doggedness. In particular, the Stanbridge collection of 1519 excels in the language of defiance, including a litany of wonderfully pungent insults: "Thou stynkest;" "Tourde in thy tethe;" "He is a kokolde;" "He is the veryest cowherde that every pyst;" "Thou strykest me that dare not stryke.
agayne;” “I shall kyll the with my owne knyfe.” The battered boy thus rehearsed the rhetoric of insubordination along with the language of submission.

Though the plaintive theme is persistent and clear in the schoolboy’s life as scripted in the vulgaria, it is by no means the dominant one. The bulk of the exercises deal with transactions of extracurricular life, and playing and plays figure throughout. The Magdalen collection has especially lighthearted passages about sport and holidays. Stanbridge’s vocabulary emphasizes the body and food, and his sentences are spiced with invective, as I have noted. Horman includes an entire section of sentences on hunting, fishing, dancing, dice, and tennis. Mixed liberally among these we find passages on plays and disguisings. One student waxes enthusiastic: “I delyte to se enterludis.” Indeed, the vulgaria give us our most valuable evidence of the use of dramatic play in the life of early Tudor schoolboys. One of Horman’s scholars would have translated, “We have played a comedie of greke” and “We have played a comedy of latten.” Another boasted, “I am sent for to playe well a parte in a playe,” “I am pryncipall player,” and “I have played my parte without any fayle.” So it seems that humanist schools used performance of classical drama to teach boys to play principal parts without fail, two decades or more before the first school companies performed at court.

Roman comedy, adapted to use as vulgaria, took adult role-playing to new levels of sophistication and subversive potential. In an effort to encourage the speaking of pure classical Latin, John Anwykyll in the 1480s and then Udall in about 1530 replaced homegrown vulgars with dialogue culled directly from Terence. When schoolboys practiced the cheeky rhetoric of Terence’s clever slaves, greedy parasites, randy old men, and scapegrace sons, the phrasebooks had the ironic effect of wielding the authority of classical Latin for potentially transgressive ends. Though most of the sentences from Terence provided phrases for ordinary daily communication, many took the boys beyond their own experience, social circumstances, and conventions of morality. Anwykyll’s edition undercuts the pious observation, “There is no thynge bettyr nor more laudabyll than to subdue the desyres of the flesh,” with the withering riposte, “I hadd levyr dye.” His boys rehearsed the roles of lusty lovers—“Make the mery with hyr or take thy sport or plesure with-in in the mene whyle”—and of jaded roués: “I am fourty yere olde / Sche that iche luf is syxtene yere olde no moore.” Here, with the authority of the ancients, the schoolboy took a taste of the gentleman’s pleasures.
He tasted the gentleman’s responsibilities and prerogatives as well. Anwykyl’s young Terentians rehearsed lordly ways as they recited, “In huntynge and hawkynge I take my sporte. . . . Thou servyst me kindly gentilly or kurtisly. Itt longeth to a gentillman to be free and liberall of pursse or expense.” They practiced a lofty disdain for wealth—“Itt is grete wynnynge or avayle sumtyme to forsake money”—but they also practiced despising the poor, from the point of view of beleaguered men of property: “Thei that are in litell prosperyte are gretely suspi-
cious.”

Horman’s boys echoed the myth of noblesse oblige: “Gentyll mennyss children shulde be most courtesey and redy to do well.” What can these lines have meant to those schoolboys whose grandfathers and fathers were not gentlemen? Or what can the galvanic effect have been when a prosperous merchant’s son had to recite, “I was not borne to a haefpenny” or “I was not borne to a fote of lande”? What was the social fantasy value when the poor scholarship boy recited, “My fader is a grete man of landes”; “My purse is heuy with money”; “I lye in a feder bedde euery nyght”; “I haue the maystry.” Certainly either boy, rich or poor, son of a citizen or gently bred, was being groomed as a social arbiter when he learned to translate, “He hathe all the maners of a gentylman.”

Several passages produce rehearsals on a grander scale, as, for example, when a student takes the role of a man sending letters to a monarch, offering strategic advice on timing their delivery, “whether they be gevyn when he is troblede or vexide or else when he is mery. Therfor I commande my servaunt that I sent to the kynge that he sholde wayt a season to delyver his letters.”

Horman’s students likewise envisaged discourse with a monarch. One comes as a petitioner—“I will offer up a supplication to the kynge”—but another seems to be the bearer of the king’s own authority, proclaiming, “I have the kyng’s great charter with his great seal.”

Always assuming that his Eton boys aspired to “a great room in the City,” Horman presents dozens of passages in which pupils impersonate strategists in a perilous public arena: “Some wolde undo the realme: if theyr malice were nat repressed. . . . Take regarde of the comynwelthe. . . . A crafty couynynce: kepeth great matters privy.”

And the chapter on judicial affairs offers scripts on an even darker side of public prominence:

Al were punysshyd indifferently gylty & ungylty. . . . Every word is taken for treason or death. . . . They that do execution for treason hang some,
head some, & quarter some. . . . He smote hym with small choppis of the axe that he might suffer the crueler torment.\textsuperscript{52}

To schoolboys in the age of Cardinal Wolsey these sentences must have been thrilling and chastening rehearsals of the realities—and injustices—of power. The \textit{vulgaria} brought the high drama of great office into the Tudor classroom, to be spoken by boys who themselves had abundant experience of violence as a collateral cost of moving up.

While the threat of authoritarian violence resounds throughout the \textit{vulgaria}, finally it serves as an agonistic background to the dominant theme of self-advancement. Ambition and impudent humor coalesce in one little monologue that epitomizes the Tudor \textit{vulgaria} as I understand them. The Magdalen schoolmaster causes his young speaker to reflect on the inequities of the \textit{status quo}:

\begin{quote}
Ther be many lordes that cannot pley the lorde, but I that am none can pley it rially. It is pite that I am non in verry dede, for while other men blouth the fyre, I slepe styll be I never so ofte callede upon.\textsuperscript{53}
\end{quote}

The schoolmaster author has imagined a boy who conflates the roles of sleepy schoolboy and social critic. The passage depends for its humor on the indolent boy's vision of the lordly life as luxuriating in bed while others do the work. Though he may be no moral exemplar, this undeniably attractive character has mastered the deepest lessons of humanist schooling: he understands social roles as playing parts, and he is confident that a clever man can sometimes play the lord's part "royally" while many born in such roles cannot. Such lessons in raw ambition may undercut humanist pretensions to high moral and civic callings, but the schoolmaster who produced this text imagined for his students (and by extension for himself) social possibilities more varied and more self-determining than the role of a servile clerk.

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\textbf{NOTES}

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A passage from the Bristol *vulgaria* circa 1428 illustrates the social mix in a school of the time, and hints at a meritocratic ethic: “Chyldryn stond yn a row, sum wel a-rayd, sum euel a-rayd; dyvers beth the wyttys” (Orme, *Education and Society*, 95). Joan Simon points out that many school foundations of the late fifteenth century “were not intended to serve a parish, let alone the needy poor; rather it was for the sons of merchants and gentlemen that founders wished to provide, or at the least respectable citizens—though some of these might qualify as poor” (*Education and Society in Tudor England* [Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1966], 31). The student body at Eton may be taken as an indication of the mix of social degrees at a grammar school in the period. Of eighty-three students in the college register whose Eton careers overlapped with the dramatist Henry Medwall’s time there (1474–1480), eight boys, or one in ten, were identified in the indenture rolls as sons of tradesmen: two clothmen, an apothecary, a baker, a “citizen taylor,” a shipwright, a saddler, and a draper. If we consider that Medwall, the son of a member of a city company of clerks, was not identified as such in the rolls, we may assume that there were at Eton more sons of tradesmen and craftsmen likewise not identified here. Tradesmen, of course, were sometimes rich, even if they were not, strictly speaking, gentlemen. Six boys are clearly identified in the rolls as the sons of gentlemen, admitted as “commensals” or paying boarders, eligible to sit at the higher table with chaplains and “gentleman clerks.” This survey is compiled from Wasey Sterry, *The Eton College Register 1441–1698* (Eton: Spottiswoode, Ballantyne, and Company, 1943).

Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine famously argue that humanist schooling “stamped the more prominent members of the new élite with an indelible cultural seal of superiority, it equipped lesser members with fluency and the learned habit of attention to textual detail and it offered everyone a model of true culture as something given, absolute, to be mastered, not questioned” (*From Humanism to the Humanities* [Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1986], xiv).

Jonathan Goldberg, *Writing Matter: From the Hands of the English Renaissance* (Palo Alto: Stanford Univ. Press, 1990), 42, 48. In Goldberg’s reading, Tudor pedagogic texts “are bent, at one and the same time, at extensions that secure a place for pedagogy and subaltern classes (insofar, that is, as classes below the aristocracy are the classes producing humanists), and that yet keeps that sphere exclusive by not extending the apparatus too far” (45).

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Paul Sullivan

191
9 Richard Halpern, *The Poetics of Primitive Accumulation* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1991), 30–31. Halpern’s conclusion, like Goldberg’s, is equivocal: “This is not to say that the system cannot produce genuinely revolutionary or aberrational styles, only that it tends not to” (43).

10 Halpern observes that humanist stylistics helped to effect a social shift in which “the behavioral disposition of the ‘middle sort’ was imposed on a relatively broad array of classes” (11), but that this apparent inclusivity created a new exclusivity, a “normalizing social order based on the production of empty heterogeneity” (44).


12 Stewart, 95.


16 The last four sentences in the Drury collection evoke a feast, rhythmically alternated with another familiar school ritual: “Haddistu nouth a capon at thyn diner? / Haddistu nouth to day a good stourid [well-beaten] ars? / I haue drynk j-now at myn mete, but j haue to litil breed” (Meech, 83).

17 Quoted in Meech, 83. Note on authorship: Orme says that the sentences in the collection edited by Meech were not all composed by Drury, though he was headmaster of the Beccles school at which they were collected. Orme writes, “The writer of the MS was John Hardgrave. He was almost certainly a senior pupil or possibly assistant master; he came from the town and is mentioned in one other local document. Most of the texts he copied were by other people, several of them by Drury the schoolmaster
and identified as such. The latinitates printed by Meech are not attributed to an author" (personal correspondence, 14 February 2005). As Orme explains, these sentences are examples of a pedagogical practice in which "a deliberately inaccurate English sentence is placed before an accurate Latin one" in order to illustrate the folly of translation that follows Latin word order rather than word agreement or good sense (Education and Society, 79). The writer announces his method in his title, "Parue latinitates de termino natalis dominsi [s]ed non pro forma reddicionis" [Little latins, but not with their proper translations]. Examples include: Anus meus venientis ad scolam verberabitur [When I come to school my arse will be beaten]; Ego vidi te ebrius dum fuisti sobrius (Meech, 82) [I, being drunk, saw you while you were sober] (my translations).

5 Five or more of the vulgaria collections (Anwykyll, the Arundel ms., the Royal ms., Stanbridge, Horman, and perhaps Whittinton) came from what Orme has called the "Magdalen Diaspora," emanating from the new humanist grammar school at Magdalen College, Oxford, in the last decade of the fifteenth century. Two of the collections, by Horman and Udall, are closely associated with Winchester and Eton and clearly share the concerns of the Magdalen schoolmasters with pure classical Latin and the use of "good authors." See Orme, Magdalen College, 56.


20 Whittinton presents a little dialogue that indicates that his pupils used the vulgaria for their written lessons:

—Hast thou wryt all the vulgares that our master hat gyuen unto us this mornynge. Omni ne tibi (vel abs te) scripta sunt vulgaria? Que a preceptore (vel preceptori) nobis hoderno mane fuerunt tradita.
—I haue wryt them euery one. Omni quidem a me (vel mihi) sunt litteris mandata. (White, 87)

Horman relates the use of vulgaria to written lessons, and also to dictation and memorization: "I have nat written my laten. Prescriptum non descripsi" (92r); "Recorde thy latten: Meditare dictatum" (89v). Stanbridge's scholars learned, “It is a grete helpe for scollars to speke latyn” (White, 14), echoing the Erasmian emphasis on Latin conversation.

21 Stanbridge, in White, 25.

22 Orme expresses skepticism about this claim, pointing out that “in dramatic terms they [the vulgaria] are bottom of the pile in what schools did,” as “their dramatic potential was much less than that of a colloquy which might be actually acted, and that in turn much less than of a play of the kind that we know some school pupils performed (probably often out of school)” in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (personal correspondence, 9 February 2006). My claim is predicated only on the fact that the vulgaria, to judge by the timetables discussed here, occasioned literary recitation non in propria persona—scripted role-playing in the school—almost daily over several years.

23 A vulgar in the notebook of the Bristol scholar Thomas Schort, circa 1428, rubs the noses of poor scholars in the fact that their studies were their only way of getting on in the world, obliging them to recite: “Pore scolares schold bysilych tan hede to here bokys, the whyche byth not y-ware of non othere help but of here one konnyng” (“Pauperes scolares suis libris officiosissime insudarent, qui non considerati sunt de aliquo alio auxilio nisi de sua scientia,” in Orme, Education and Society, 110).
194

Playing the Lord

24 Arundel ms., item 74. The citation numbers for this volume refer not to pages, but to passages, as numbered by Nelson in his topical rearrangement. The same anonymous schoolmaster asserts a connection between profit and “good authors,” a shibboleth of humanist conviction: “ther is nothynge better nother more profitable to brynge a mann to connynge than to marke suche thynges as is left of goode auctours, and I mean not all, but the beste” (180).

25 Whittinton, in White, 73. Whittinton may also suggest that learning is a form of grace that leads to social advancement: “Many a ragged colt proued to be a good horse. Many a poore mannes sone by grace and vertue ascendeth to hye rowmes and authoryte. And so he auoydeth the incomodytes of pouerte and seruytute” (White, 108).

26 Horman, 91r.

27 Several of the humanist vulgaria taught the pupils to attribute his future prosperity to the efforts of the schoolmaster, even to the extent of effecting a transference of authority from home to school: “He is that mann,” wrote the author of the Arundel ms., “whatsumever encresyng or riches or worshippys I cum to, I shall never forgete hys meryttes done unto me” (Arundel ms., 134). The master of the Royal Manuscript stages a little disputation between two boys that dramatizes the extent to which school supplanted home. The first boy states, “Me semeth i ame more bownd to my maisters than to my father or my mother,” despising them as breeders of his “damnyd body,” while his masters “bring me to lernyng and maner” of both livelihood and virtue; the second boy rejoins that his friend should think himself “more bownd to thi father and mother,” for they not only bore and nourished him, but “prouydyd the masters” (Orme, Education and Society, 142).

28 Stanbridge, in White, 15 (Dedi penas aurora; Preceptor a me sumpsit penas); 19 (Preceptor colaphum male addit).

29 Stanbridge, in White, 30 (Indoctissimus sum discipulorum; Animus a studio abhoret); 20 (Timeo preceptorem vel a preceptore); 16 (Tedet me studij; Tedet me vite mee); 25 (Septennuis sum).

30 Stanbridge begins his collection with verses from “The auctour,” in English, adjuring his “lyttel children” to accept beating for their own good:

Unto this treatyse with goodly aduertence
These latyn wordes in your herte to impresse
To [t]hende that ye may with all your intelligence
Serue god your maker holy vnto his reuerence
And yf ye do not / the rodde must not spare
You for to lerne with his sharpe morall sence
Take now good hede / and herken your vulgare. (White, 13)

The Arundel ms. includes a little dialogue that develops the theme of beating as a necessary antidote to boyish sloth:

—Gentle maister, i wolde desire iij thynges of you: onn that i might not wake over longe of nyghtes, another that i be not bett when i com to schole, the thirde that i might ever emong go play me.

—Gentle scholar, I wolde that ye shulde do iij other thynges: onn that ye ryse betyme off mornynges, another that ye go to your booke delygently, the thirde that ye behave yourself against gode devoutely, all menn honestly, and then ye shall have youre askynge. (139)

31 Stanbridge, in White, 24 (Dignus es plagis); 20 (Collocabo tibi gnatam).

32 White, 131 note 20, line 31. Anwykyll includes a line from Terence (Andria, act 1, scene 5, line 255) that may have taken on a double meaning for his students: “Thou must wedd a wyf today / Uxor tibi ducenda e hodie inquit” (4r).
33 Whittinton, in White, 87–88 (Preceptoris filia mihi inuitissimo nupsit / vel nupta est hodie; Mihi adeo aspera et acerba videtur coniunx: ut si ardentibus prunis cremaretur nihil pejderem; Sic me complectitur (vel sic ab ea complector) ut vestigia (diu post) natibus inhereant).

34 Stewart, 98.

35 Whittinton, in White, 97. Note the similar sentiment in a Bristol passage from 1428: “Conyng ys an hy tre, of the whyche the rote ys ful byttyr bot the fryte ys ful swete. He that dispyssyth the byttynasse of the rote schal neuer tast the swetenasse of the fryte” (Orme, Education and Society, 103).

36 Whittinton, in White, 102.


38 Stanbridge went into 107 editions and Whittington 181, as against eight for Anwykyll’s sentences from Terence, and four for the gentle Horman. See Orme, Magdalen College, 57.

39 Stanbridge, in White, 17 (Male oles), 19 (Merda dentibus inheret), 20 (Alter supponit uxorem suam), 22 (Imbellissimus est omnis), 20 (Me percussi que referire non audeo), 20 (Proprio gladio te interimam).

40 See Arundel ms., 23.

41 Horman, 281v (Me iuvat spectare ludicra).

42 Horman, 87r (Representavimus fabulam palliatam; Representaviumus fabulam togatam); 281r (Esocatus sum ad aedendam nauiter operam in ludicro); 281v (Sum princeps personatorum; Aedidi operam procul omni lapsu aut cessatione). The Arundel ms. gives an elaborated example of a boy in the role of drama critic, implying that he had considerable experience in Oxford, where there was bear baiting at the castle and “discontenane” in vacation for “sportes and plays.” The young connoisseur was to say, “I remember not that ever I sawe a play that more delityde me than yesterdays, and albeit chefe prayse be to the doer thereof, yete ar none of the players to be disapoyntede of there praise, for every mann plaide so his partes that, except hym that plaide kynge Salomon, it is harde to say whom a mann may praise before other” (110). Nelson speculates that this play of Solomon may be the lost play by Thomas More that he mentions in his earliest extant letter. See Nelson’s introduction, Arundel ms., xxviii.

43 Orme doubts that Horman’s references to drama can be taken as reliable evidence that pupils performed classical plays at Winchester or Eton in Horman’s time. Orme points out that, while most collections were produced from and for classroom practice, “Horman’s vulgaria is different—it is based in the study, an encyclopaedia.” Consequently, Orme believes that Horman “invented a lot more than he would have done in normal classroom work” (personal correspondence, 7 and 11 August 2005).

44 Anwykyll, 7r-v (Nichil prius aut forcius est quam pravos carnis affectus superare. Mori me malim); 22r (Tu cum illa te intus oblecta interim); 9v (Annos annus sum quadraginta. Ea si visit annos nata est sedecim non amplius).

45 The non-Terentian collections also model conversation on adult pleasures. Stanbridge teaches his pupils three different ways to say, “He is drunke. Ebrius est. Tamulentus est. Victus est ceruisia” (White, 27). The same boys learned to observe, “Here be many praty maydes. Hec sunt multe lepide pulle” (White, 27) and to keep score: “He lay with a harlot al nyght. Concupit cum pellece tota noctu” (White, 23).

Horman, by contrast, takes a conventionally censorious tone when he speaks of “An
excedynge stronge hore. *Mulier portentosae libidinis*” (64v) in his chapter on vices and dishonest practices [De Vitiis et improbis moribus]. Nevertheless, his students confront incest and pederasty in the same chapter, translating and reciting, “He kepte his suster openly as she had be his true wedded wife. *Sororem in modum iustae uxoris pro palam habuit*” (68r) and “He gropeth vnclenly children and maydens. *Pretextatos et puellas impudice contractat*” (68v). Stanbridge offers more conventional outlets to his young clerks-in-the-making when he asks them to contemplate their adult roles: “What nynde arte you in / to be a preest / or a wedded man? *Quid animi habes ad sacerdotium / an ad nuptias*” (White, 17).

46 Anwykyll, 19r (Venando et aucupando me oblecto); 2r (Michi serviebas liberaliter humaniter benigne); 31v (Convenit virum nobilem vel ingenuum in expensis esse liberalen); 21r (Pecuniam in loco negligere maximum interdum est lucrum); 24r–v (Omnes quibus res sunt minus secunde magis sunt suspiciosi).

47 Hornman, 85r (Ingenui pueri essent ad officium paratissimi).

48 Stanbridge, in White, 22 (Neutiquam heres natus sum; Neutiquam natus sum; Pater meus est ample possessionis); 17 (Crumena mea est nummis referta); 18 (Quiesco in culastra plumali singulis noctibus); 27 (Concedo mihi palmam); 29 (Cunctos mores nobilitatis habet).

49 Arundel ms., 266.

50 Hornman, 84r (Offeram principi libellum supplicem / pel petitorium); 84v (Habeo diploma regium / eius signaculo munitum). In a distinctly dramatic passage in the Arundel ms. the pupil addresses a friend as a model citizen:

Thomas, thou arte worthy to be commendide for bycause thou spakist yesterday so well, so wisely, so nobly for the comynwelth. Methynke thou didist but thy duty, for every goode cytisyn is bounde no alonly to prefare the comynwelth befors his private welth but also if eny jeopardy cum that he be redye to put hymselff in jeopardy. (269)

The depreciation of “private welth” may be a burgher swipe at hereditary grandees, but the emphasis on effective speaking for the commonwealth rings with the piety of civic humanism.

51 Hornman, 193v (Quendam rempub. euerterent: ni talium conatibus iretur obuiam); 194r (Consulas in commune); 196r (Bene tegit cultus magna consilia).

52 Hornman, 201v (Non possum aequo in eum esse animo qui autos agros mihi interuerit); 204r (Omnes promiscue / vel nullo discrimine sones et insones puniti sunt); 207r (Omne verbum criminosa, aut exitiabile habent); 209r (Vindices rerum capitalium / quibusdam laqueo gulam frangunt / quibusdam caput adimunt quosdam dissecant; Minutis securis ictibus eum feriebat / ut atrocious expendetur supplicium).

53 Arundel ms., 351 (Multi sunt domini qui non possunt agere dominos at ego qui non sum pulcherime possum. facinus est re vera non esse. ego cum sufflantibus alijs ignem dominio inclamatus assidue).