ABSTRACT

In this paper, I argue for the existence of a pervasive atmosphere of hostility toward knowledge workers in early modern England. My evidence consists of plays by Brome, Chapman, Heywood, Middleton, Shakespeare, and Sharpham; Ciceronian texts in the English grammar school curriculum, especially the *de Officiis*; and works by Erasmus and Bacon that bookend the period under consideration. My research challenges a prominent explanation, advanced by Lynn Enterline, for the dramatic characterization of the stock pedant on the English stage. The pedant is less special than scholars have hitherto assumed; he is, in fact, only one member of a broader class of scholarly figures subject to dramatic scorn. The grammar school curriculum, replete with writers promoting the superiority of action to contemplation, provided budding playwrights with literary precedent for their intellectual caricatures.
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SCHOLARLY FIGURES AND THE CONVENTIONS OF MOCKERY ON THE EARLY MODERN ENGLISH STAGE

The goal of this paper is to establish a link between pervasive hostility toward knowledge workers in early modern English drama and the grammar school curriculum. Scholarly figures on the early modern stage shared a series of negative attributes.1 The oft-studied Holofernes of Love’s Labour’s Lost created a template for these traits which other playwrights expanded in new directions. Plays by Brome, Chapman, Heywood, and Sharpham demonstrate the ways in which playwrights chose to emphasize and embellish the vices and incompetencies initially displayed by Holofernes, while Middleton’s Chaste Maid in Cheapside illustrates the transposition of these features onto other scholarly figures. Such dramatic representations of scholars make for a stark contrast with ideas found in Ciceronian texts. Cicero’s prominence in the grammar school curriculum primed playwrights to prefer virtuous action to contemplation and provided an ideal against which to contrast their scholars.

Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century schoolmasters were famed for their violence in the classroom.2 This association with violence has been particularly prominent in recent studies.3 As a


result, the explanation for the emergence of the stock comic pedant in drama has generally been taken to be straightforward and sociological: schoolmasters’ proverbial brutality engendered hostility among their pupils, some of whom grew up to take literary revenge. The playwrights who made use of stock pedants were among their number, or at least recognized that a significant share of the audience would gladly pay to see schoolmasters shamed on stage. This explanation, most explicitly made by Lynn Enterline, is intuitively plausible and well-supported. But its success has obscured another, more surprising element of the story: that the humanist curriculum itself directly contributed to the mockery of intellectuals. The grammar school curriculum elevated Ciceronian ethics to a pre-eminent position in the intellectual framework presented to pupils. The Ciceronian texts which formed the stuff of pupils’ learning, especially the de Officiis, taught them to value active life over contemplative life. Cicero’s texts are emblematic of grammar school values that biased students against the apparently passive scholarly lifestyle. This bias, though subtle, provides a missing explanatory link for the consistent dramatic depiction of the pedant as a laughingstock. This explanation also applies to other scholarly characters who shared the features which made the pedant a comic laughingstock. Among these were students and teachers in grammar schools and universities, the university-educated con-man, the ostentatiously learned gentleman, and the scholar-magician.

All of these figures are subject to negative portrayal in the drama. Though they are variably characterized, their dramatic function is always to provide a laughingstock. In each of these plays, the pedant’s features exclude him from the ranks of Cicero’s ideal men, who are virtuous, devoted to civic service, and skilled orators. The stock comic pedant, by contrast, is defined by vice and

4. Enterline, Shakespeare’s Schoolroom, 104.

5. Unlike their counterparts, scholarly mages are lightning rods for fear of the occult; they are less frequently comical (Peter Fabell in The Merry Devil of Edmonton comes to mind). Like their counterparts, however, the drama never fails to illustrate the error of their scholarly path.
incompetence. In addition to being cowardly, gluttonous, and hubristic, he is rhetorically and pedagogically incompetent. At times a single feature may contribute to both vice and incompetence. The pedant’s ostentatious Latin and English, for instance, signal his hubris. But they also contribute to his rhetorical incompetence: by making him appear stuffy, ridiculous, and out of touch with his audience, they make him a less effective orator. His pedagogy is haunted by faulty Latin translations, jumbled classical allusions, and counter-productive disciplinary methods. The scorn for knowledge workers indicated by the consistent attribution of such negative features to pedants and their ilk cannot be traced to the schoolmaster’s violent classroom management alone. The existence of a pervasive intellectual bias with roots in the grammar school curriculum would go a long way toward explaining the negativity directed toward scholarly figures in the drama.

I begin by reviewing the scholarly consensus on Cicero’s importance in English thought during the Renaissance and his centrality in the curriculum. I then identify representative moments across his texts that endorse action and contrast it with contemplation. This type of commonplacing, or reading for *sententia*, is fitting because it is precisely the type of exercise through which students in the grammar schools became familiar with Cicero’s texts. The four plays I rely on to reconstruct the arsenal of features consistently attributed to stock pedants are Thomas Heywood’s *How a Man May Choose a Good Wife From a Bad* (1601), George Chapman’s *The Gentleman Usher* (1602), Edward Sharpham’s *Cupid’s Whirligig* (1607), and Richard Brome’s *The City Wit* (1630).6 Taken together, the pedants in these plays demonstrate the whole range of approaches playwrights employed to mock

scholars on stage. After establishing the pedant’s dramatic profile, I turn to the fifth and final play, *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (1613), in which a university student and his tutor substantiate the existence of a broader class of ‘scholarly’ characters. Members of this class were unified by dramatic features and comic functions. Chief among these was their role as lightning rods for public antipathy toward knowledge workers. Each of the scholarly figures considered in this paper embodies some features in more exemplary ways than others. Nevertheless, all deviate from Cicero’s ideal.

To understand how Cicero’s ideas became so important in England, one must understand the humanist curriculum. Once seen as the champions of progress and lauded for their curricular reform, the humanists have recently acquired a more nuanced reputation as ambitious men whose efforts to reshape their culture met with mixed results. Nevertheless, the curriculum in most grammar schools during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries reflected humanist ideals, especially the study of classical texts in their original language. This curriculum catapulted Cicero to intellectual pre-eminence during the Renaissance. Anthony Grafton refers to the Renaissance as

7. Thomas Middleton, *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* in *English Renaissance Drama*, Bevington, Engel, Maus, and Rasmussen, eds. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002). I recognize that ‘scholar’ was, during this period, an imprecise term covering students in grammar schools, literate gentlemen, university students, professors, and graduates, and other well-educated men, especially those who had some connection to the classics. This imprecision is what makes it such a useful catchall for this kind of stage type. See the *OED* s.v. “Scholar,” particularly 1.a, 1.b, 2.a, 2.b, and 3.a. [www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com) accessed 11/15/2018.


9. The book most responsible for this shift in perception is Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine’s *From Humanism to the Humanities* (London: Duckworth, 1986); see especially 196 on humanism’s failures. Mike Pincombe’s *Elizabethan Humanism* (London: Longman, 2001) is predicated on a similar skepticism about the humanists’ aims, e.g., 3-4.

“the period of his greatest glory.” Mike Pincombe devotes the second chapter of his *Elizabethan Humanism* to “Ciceronian humanitas.” Jeffrey Masten describes Ciceronian thought as “built into the structure of, and central to the rhetoric of, the everydayness of male-male relations in this era,” and Rhodri Lewis describes Cicero’s ideas as the essential theoretical foundation for public life in “the long sixteenth century.” Ciceronian citations pepper the introduction to Joshua Scodel’s *Excess and the Mean*, and he elevates Cicero above Aristotle and Seneca as “especially” influential for sixteenth- and seventeenth-century extollers of moderation. Matthew Adams identifies Cicero as “the author most frequently employed in the composition of letters” and one of the primary sources of commonplace gleanings. The most thorough investigations of Cicero’s presence in sixteenth-century English writing are Howard Jones’ *Master Tully*, Baldwin’s *Small Latine & Lesse Greek*, and Anna-Brunhilde Modersohn’s 1926 article “Cicero im englischen Geistesleben des 16. Jahrhunderts.” Modersohn’s article begins with an impressive eleven-page catalog of references to Cicero’s works by English writers of prose and verse, then analyzes his significance to the intellectual climate of the period. His system of thought, which “circumscribed and influenced all aspects of life,” boiled down to one firmly held maxim: “the individual must be subordinate to the

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commonwealth” (237). A quick glance at Cicero’s entry in Baldwin’s index confirms this impression: no other authors, including Shakespeare and Erasmus, have longer entries. Baldwin memorably portrays Cicero’s role in sixteenth-century syllabi as that of a “dictatorial monarch of all that he surveys” before whom “all must creep.” The same term appears in his discussion of rhetoric: “Cicero is in fact the ultimate dictator in rhetoric, to which logic was so subordinate in grammar school as not greatly to matter.” Jones confirms these impressions of Cicero’s curricular and intellectual influence and adds to them explicit study of “the contents of the philosophical works themselves,” a pivot from “the question of sources” with which most twentieth-century scholarship on Cicero’s philosophy has been preoccupied. In his conclusion, Jones notes that Cicero’s influence in the Jacobean period “is less pervasive and less pronounced,” but asserts that it is “still felt.”

If Cicero’s influence is indeed less “dictatorial” than in the sixteenth century, it remains apparent in early seventeenth-century drama. Yet only rarely have scholars traced dramatic content back to Cicero. Although his texts are widely acknowledged to have been central to the intellectual climate of Renaissance England, he plays only a minor role in recent works on classical reception in English literature. Such studies are often routed through Shakespeare. There have been connections

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18. “Eine neue, das ganze Leben umfassende und gestaltende Ethik brauchte und fand man bei C...” (236). Of his continuing influence: Cicero’s thought „bleibt tonangebend bis ins 17. Jh. Nicht nur, daß man C. mit besonderer Vorliebe zitiert, man beruft sich auch auf ihn als Gewährsmann bei allen möglichen Gelegenheiten“ („remained predominant up into the seventeenth century not only in that one cited Cicero with special preference, but also in that one called on him as an authority at every possible opportunity“); “…, daß das Individuum der Allgemeinheit geopfert werden muß” (237).


22. Ibid., 278.

23. Laurie Shannon’s Sovereign Amity (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002) is an exception to this trend; see, for example, 58-61, 67, 90-91, and the citation below on de Amicitia.
between individual classical authors and Shakespeare, such as Jonathan Bate’s *Shakespeare and Ovid*, between Shakespeare and specific classical legends, like Heather James’ *Shakespeare’s Troy*, or between Shakespeare and specific philosophies, as is the case in Patrick Gray’s *Shakespeare and the Fall of the Roman Republic*, billed as a study of “Selfhood, Stoicism, and Civil War.” Martindale and Taylor’s *Shakespeare and the Classics* has sections on Ovid, Virgil, Plautus, Terence, Seneca, Plutarch, and the Greeks, but none on Cicero. Colin Burrow’s *Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity* likewise acknowledges Cicero’s cultural influence, but not his dramatic afterlife. Even Highet, in his wide-ranging *The Classical Tradition*, repeatedly identifies Cicero’s stylistic precedent while neglecting his influence over content. Given the consensus on his intellectual ubiquity, it seems as though Cicero’s literary influence should not be difficult to discern.

Continental editions of Cicero’s works were available in England by the beginning of the sixteenth century. A comparison of Cicero’s entry in Pollard and Redgrave’s *Short Title Catalogue* for 1475-1640 to other major classical authors quickly reveals his prominence. There were at least thirty Latin editions of *de Officiis* printed for English consumption between 1573 and 1630, plus thirteen vernacular editions between 1534 and 1631 for a total of forty-three editions in a century. This single work went through more editions than Virgil’s collected works, Eclogues, and Georgics.


combined, which appeared in a total of thirty-five editions between 1515 and 1629, and dwarfed the
five editions of Senecan texts printed between 1475 and 1640.\footnote{30} Even Ovid has fewer entries in the
catalog than Cicero: ninety-six to the orator’s hundred and nineteen.\footnote{31} The most commonly taught
Ciceronian texts were \textit{De Amicitia}, \textit{De Senectute}, and \textit{De Officiis}, of which the third was most
important.\footnote{32} In them, Cicero adheres to a single conviction: that civic contribution and the execution
of moral duties are the conditions of human excellence. So it is that he has the admirable Gaius
Laelius, the main speaker of \textit{De Amicitia} (44 B.C.), explain his absence from a meeting of the Augurs
after the death of his closest friend as a case of physical sickness rather than emotional distress. “No
personal inconvenience of any kind,” he says, firmly, “ought to have kept me from the discharge of
the duty you mentioned…nor do I think it possible for any event of this nature to cause a man of
strong character to neglect any duty” (II.8-9).\footnote{33} The qualities of the men whom Cicero praises are
antithetical to those which came to define English stage pedants.

\textit{De Senectute} (44 B.C) delivers Cicero’s thoughts on aging well to his friend Atticus. The
primary speaker in the dialogue, Marcus Cato, explains that “the most suitable defences of old age
are the principles and practice of the virtues, which, if cultivated in every period of life, bring forth
wonderful fruits at the close of a long and busy career…because it is most delightful to have the
consciousness of a life well spent and the memory of many deeds worthily performed” (III.9). This

dition (London: The Biographical Society, 1976), 322-23, 426-8.}
\footnote{31. Ibid., 201-3.}
\footnote{32. Enterline, \textit{Shakespeare’s Schoolroom}, 12, 31; Mack, \textit{Elizabethan Rhetoric}, 13-14, 20, 23, 35, 50n10, 176, 221n18;
Burrow, “Shakespeare and Humanistic Culture” in \textit{Shakespeare and the Classics} ed. Charles Martindale and A. B. Taylor
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 13 and \textit{Shakespeare and Classical Antiquity} (Oxford: Oxford University
Press, 2013), 21; Lewis, \textit{Hamlet and the Vision of Darkness}, 18; Thomas, \textit{The Ends of Life}, 26. For the importance of \textit{De
Amicitia}, which I discuss only briefly here, see Shannon, \textit{Sovereign Amity}, 23-31, 40-41.}
\footnote{33. Quotations from Cicero, \textit{De Senectute}, \textit{De Amicitia}, \textit{De Divinatione}, trans. William A. Falconer (Cambridge,
Mass: Harvard University Press, 1923).}
is a quintessentially Ciceronian position: a good life is one of active civic contribution. Cato’s first exemplar is Quintus Fabius Maximus, a man “not more distinguished in war than in civil life” (IV.11). Cato admits that not everyone can think back on a host of distinguished military victories and suggests that “there is also the tranquil and serene old age of a life spent quietly, amid pure and refining pursuits—such an old age, for example, as we are told was that of Plato, who died, pen in hand, in his eighty-first year” (V.13). Great philosophers are, however, an exception: Cicero generally frowns on isolation. What emerges from De Senectute is a picture of old age in which the chief pleasure and good is “to instruct and train young men and equip them for every function and duty” (IX.29). Though Cicero endorses contemplative pursuits for the elderly as accessories to public service, the kind of virtuous mentorship provided by elder statesmen in his dialogues is entirely at odds with the overbearing, frequently useless teaching depicted on the English stage.

Duty is the centerpiece of Cicero’s philosophy and the subject of De Officiis. “No phase of life, whether public or private,” he writes, “can be without its moral duty; on the discharge of such duties depends all that is morally right, and on their neglect all that is morally wrong” (I.i.4). The treatise repeatedly attests to his conviction that a man’s chief duties are essentially public. “We are not born for ourselves alone,” says Cicero, “but our country claims a share of our being, and our friends a share” (I.vii.22). Citizens should “always be contributing something to the commonweal,” not least because “true and philosophic greatness of spirit regards the moral goodness to which nature most aspires as consisting in deeds, not in fame,” and the greatest soul belongs to the one who “[does] deeds not only great and in the highest degree useful, but extremely arduous and laborious and fraught with danger both to life and to many things that make life worth living” (I.xvi.52, I.xix.65, I.xx.66). Conversely, “to be drawn by study away from active life is contrary to

moral duty. For the whole glory of virtue is in activity” (I.vi.19). Men who occupy themselves wholly
with their own affairs are “traitors to social life” (I.ix.29). Cicero particularly criticizes those who
“devote too much industry and too deep study to matters that are obscure and difficult and useless
as well,” a charge that will particularly haunt scholarly figures (I.vi.19). Finally, he encourages men to
practice “steadfastness, temperance, self-control, and considerateness of others” (I.xxviii.98). Cicero
praises action over reputation, bravery over cowardice, and temperance over venality. 35 While
reputation is undoubtedly important to Cicero These qualities contrast markedly with the English
pedant’s hubris, cowardice, and gluttony. Although scholarly figures on the English stage typically
invert Cicero’s ideal qualities, he himself reserves praise for philosophers and their studies. He writes
in the preface to De Senectute that philosophy “can never be praised as much as she deserves, since
she enables the man who is obedient to her precepts to pass every season of life free from worry,”
(I.2) and he stresses his respect for great philosophers in De Officiis (I.ix.28, I.xxi.71). He even
includes teaching among the professions “from which no small benefit to society is derived”
(I.xlii.150). But the kind of teaching he admires is linked to competent, virtuous men: skilled orators
possessing civic distinction. English stage pedants not only lack these qualities, they make
themselves laughable by failing to fulfill various kinds of moral and professional duties.

The English literary reaction against elements of fundamentally humanist educational
institutions gathered steam in the latter half of the sixteenth century, particularly in works by Lyly,
Spenser, and Sidney. 36 It was Sidney who introduced the stock comic pedant into English drama via
the character Rombus in The Lady of May (1578). When Shakespeare rejuvenated the comic pedant

35. While Cicero’s attitude toward reputation may seem hypocritical in light of his life, he is quite clear in this
passage that the best man “prefers to be first in reality rather than in name.” Reputation, he argues, depends “on the
caprice of the ignorant rabble” – an attitude perhaps reflecting the fact that he wrote from exile. Then, too, he says, an
ambitious man will be “tempted to acts of injustice by his desire for fame.” Renaissance humanists were aware of the
dissonance here: see, for instance, Petrarch to Enrico Pulice, May 13, 1351 and Petrarch to Marcus Tullius Cicero, 16

for *Love’s Labour’s Lost* (1596), he was following Sidney (who was himself following the Italians).\footnote{William Shakespeare, *Love’s Labour’s Lost* in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997).} Holofernes has been invoked by at least seven scholars in the last twenty years to explain Shakespeare’s attitude toward schoolmasters and schoolrooms.\footnote{Ursula Potter, “The Naming of Holofernes in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*,” *English Language Notes* (December 2000), 11-24, 11-2, 15; Katie Knowles, *Shakespeare’s Boys: A Cultural History* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 111-120; Delphine Lemmonnier-Texier, “‘To teach a teacher ill beseemeth me’ (II.i.107): The Dynamics of Teaching and Learning in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*,” *Actes des congrès de la Société Française Shakespeare* 32 (2015), -online since 10 March 2015; Patricia Winson, “‘A Double Spirit of Teaching’: What Shakespeare’s Teachers Teach Us,” *Early Modern Literary Studies* Special Issue 1 (1997): 8.1-31; Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching*, 39-40; Grantley, *Wit’s Pilgrimage*, 188-194; see also Enterline, *Shakespeare’s Schoolroom*.} He exemplifies most of the features that would become familiar in stock pedants. Both his Latin and English speech are contrived to display self-conscious erudition (e.g., 4.2.3-7, 4.2.13-19). Holofernes’ excitement about the dinner he plans to attend at a pupil’s house establishes a connection between pedants and gluttony later repeated by Sharpham, Heywood, and Chapman (4.2.153-66). Finally, his part as Judas Maccabeus in the play of the Nine Worthies emphasizes his lack of decorum—an inability to match action to words. This scene undoubtedly influenced Chapman’s depiction of Sarpego in *The Gentleman Usher* and that created a precedent for Chapman and Brome’s own play-directing pedants (5.2.595-629). The following examples demonstrate the different ways in which dramatists mocked scholars on stage. Looking beyond Shakespearean examples allows us to recognize a widespread dramatic hostility toward these figures, a hostility that can be traced in part to the grammar school curriculum.

Brome’s Sarpego and Heywood’s Aminadab exemplify the pedant’s cowardice, a trait that cannot be reconciled with Ciceronian valor. Like Craly’s other debtors, Sarpego refuses to pay his debt. “You,” he tells Craly, “being a Man of Wit, Braine, Forecast and Forehead, should not be so easie (I will not say foolish, for that were a figure) as to lend a Philosopher money, that cryes, when he is naked, *Omnia mea mecum porto*” (B2r). This unkindness rebounds on him in subsequent scenes as
Crary steals from him and cheats him. Sarpego receives a loan from his pupil Tobias, whom he praises as “Ciceronian” (B4r). When Crary arrives, he pretends to be an itinerant scholar begging for charity. Part of his act is the imitation of the stylistic infelicities commonly associated with schoolmasters on stage:

Belov’d of Phoebus, Minion of the Muses, deare Water Bayley of Helicon, let it not be distastfull to thy Divine cares, to receive the humble Petition of a poore Creature, made miserable by the policie of Providence. That thy rare and absolute Munificence might supply what fortune had left defective: I kisse thy learned toes. (B4r)

Such flattery is not what it seems: the Water Bayley, for instance, refers to Taylor the Water-Poet, a prolific plebeian writer criticized for mediocrity in the prefatory materials appended to The Antipodes (N9860). Crary follows this opening with a trick: maintaining a veneer of deference, he coaxes Sarpego into handing over more and more money by threatening him with his sword—though he repeatedly reminds Sarpego that these donations are voluntary. The terrified pedant accedes to each of Crary’s suggestions until eventually he has lost his purse and its contents. Once he has all the money, Crary taunts the schoolmaster for his cowardice by pointing out that he “stinks”: the pedant has soiled himself in fear (B5r). Sarpego’s response, a remarkably farcical curse, sets him apart from his peers:

Now Barbarisme, Incongruity, and false Orthography shame thee; The curse of Priscian take thee. All the parts of speech defie thee. All the Interjections of sorrow, as Heu hei, of Shunning, as Apage, of Disdaining, as Hem vab; of Scorning, as Hui; of Exclaiming, as Prob Deum atque hominum fideum take thee. My deare Pupils lendings hast thou lewdly lick’d away: And sorrowfull Sarpego is lick’d dry. There’s a figure left yet! But o thou Castalion Traytor, Pick-purse of Parnassus, and Hang-man of Helicon: Dives thirst in thy Throat; Ixions wheel on thy back; Tantalus hunger in thy guts; And Sisyphus stone in thy Bladder. (B5r-B5v)

39. Though the use of this term calls to mind Erasmus’ criticism of slavishly imitative Ciceronians, placing it in Sarpego’s mouth does not indicate much about Brome’s attitude toward the content of Cicero’s texts. Brome’s interest in Cicero appears again when Sarpego, nursing his resentment, refers to Crary (or, rather, his thieving persona) as a “Catlinarian Traytor” (C8r) and uses a phrase (Abiit, evasit, erupit) that closely follows one from Cicero’s In Catilinam II.i: “Abiit, excessit, evasit, erupit.”
Even in imprecation Sarpego cannot resist the schoolmaster’s foibles: elaboration and amplification, the tools of *copia*, allow this curse to balloon outward and take on what would be fearsome proportions if it were not a burlesque. The threat of poor spelling and rebellious parts of speech are self-evidently ludicrous, and the martial parody distinguishes the pedant from the warriors Cicero so often praises. Crasly reacts scornfully: “O fearfull curse!” he cries, “I have given my first pinch, and a little scratch’d my Goat-bearded Grammarian” (B5v). Many former schoolboys with scarred buttocks were undoubtedly pleased to see a pedant subject to a tyrant of his own.

While Sarpego never makes any claims about his courage, Heywood’s Aminadab provides an even greater example of schoolmasterly cowardice by juxtaposing a martial proclamation with risible terror. The occasion for all this is his love for a woman. After realizing that he has rivals, Aminadab attempts a foreboding speech that quickly falters:

    If my *puella* prove a drab,
    Ile be reueng’d on both, *ambo* shall die,
    Shall die by what, for *ego* I,
    Haue neuer handled I thanke God,
    Other weapon then a rod:
    I dare not fight for all my speeches,
    *Sed Cane*, if I take him thus,
    *Ego sum expers* at vntrusse.

(D1r)

The resolution of the first two lines drops away when the pedant realizes that he has no fighting prowess and that he is the one likely to ‘untruss’ in combat—that is, to drop his trousers and take a beating like those he metes out to his pupils. The farce only intensifies when Aminadab, having marshalled what courage he has, appears with “*a bill and a headpeece*” to ward off Mary’s suitors:

    Stand to me bill, and head peece sit thou close,
    I heare my loue, my wench, my ducke, me deare,
    Is sought by many suters, but with this
    Ile keepe the dore, and enter in who dare,
    *Virga* begone, thy twigs Ile turne to steele,
    These fingers that were expert in the ierke,

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40. Schafer conjectures that a goat-bearded man’s inability to grow a full beard might have called his masculinity into question (n9849).
Instead of lashing o’ the trembling podes,
Must learne pash and knock, and beate and mall,
Cleaue pates, and caputs he that enter here
Comes on his death, mors mort, is he shall taste.

(E1r)

Mary responds with disdain. “Alas poore foole,” she says, “the Pedants mad for loue, / Thinkes me more mad that I would marry him” (E1r). Aminadab ventures another brave speech, fortifying himself against any who “durst [his] manhood trie” and proclaiming his love with a schoolmasterly conjugation: “Amo, amas, amavi still” (E1v). But he quakes in his boots when the much more imposing Brabo arrives to heap scorn on his head. Brabo hurls an impressive litany of insults at the “starueling Schoole-maister,” whom he calls:

That Rat, that shrimp, that spindleshanck, that Wren, that sheep-biter, that leane chittiface, that famine, that leane Enuy, that all bones, that bare Anatomy, that Jack a Lent, that ghost, that shadow, that Moone in the waine.

(E1v)

Aminadab expresses “woe” and “paine” at this comprehensive catalog of epithets (E2r).

Threatening to “hang him vp / Like a dried Sawsedge” when he finds him, Brabo exits with Mary to “dance the shaking of the sheets” (E2r). Humiliated and disheartened, Aminadab casts aside his new weapons and renews the faith with his rod:

 Qui que quod, hence boystrous bill, come gentle Rod.
Had not grim Malkin stampt and star’d,
Aminadab had little car’d:
Or if in stead of this browne bill,
I had kept my mistris Virga still,
And he vpon an others back,
His points vntrust, his breeches slack:
My countenance he should not dash,
For I am expert in the lash.
But my sweet Lasse my loue doth flie,
Which shall make me by poysone die.
Perfidem, I will rid my life,
Either by poysone, sword, or knife.

(E2r)

With his authority confined to the schoolroom, Aminadab is limited to a wistful vision of Brabo’s well-whipped buttocks. Even his resolution to kill himself becomes comical. After failing to find a
sword, rock, knife, wall, or post with which to kill himself (a helplessness quite possibly designed to exaggerate his cowardliness yet further), Aminadab becomes the unwitting dupe of Anselm and Fuller, who trick him into buying a sleeping draught in the belief that it is poison (E4v).

Unfortunately for Aminadab, cowardice is not his only vice. Following Holofernes’ precedent, he is unable to keep his mind away from the subject of food. When his pupil Pipkin challenges him to translate the phrase “Rostra disertus amat,” he botches it: “Disertus, a disert, amat, doth loue, rostra, rostmeat” (C4r). “A good construction on an emptie stomack,” replies Pipkin (C4r).41 By having Pipkin identify Aminadab’s preoccupation with hunger as the cause of his poor translation, the play draws attention to schoolmasters’ proverbial poverty and to the gluttony with which they are increasingly associated. Sharpham’s Master Correction suffers from a similar association. His wife bemoans his laziness, complaining that he studies only “like the Clarke of a great mans kitchin, what meate he shall haue for dinner,” and an apparently moral exercise ends in a recitation of the best cure for a hangover (“sleepe and slumber”) (F1r-v, K3r). Even Chapman’s Sarpego boasts of his acting that he “ventred, being enioynde to eate / Three schollers commons, and yet drewe it neat” (I.i.215-7). This attempt to suggest an endeavor of heroic proportions succeeds only in invoking once more the pedant’s ravenous hunger. Though these references are often fleeting, they are widespread.

Unlike his gluttony, the pedant’s hubris is on near-constant display. His use of Latin is often enough to implicate him in a conceited display of erudition. Chapman’s Sarpego, for instance, peppers his speech with unnecessary Latin words like toto corde, erubescere, and ignorare, and prefers words like “precedent” and “posterior” to ‘front’ and ‘back’ when asking how to wear a hat (1.1.221, 1.2.18, 2.1.124-7). Aminadab works gratuitous Latin into his martial deliberations, interjecting the

41. For analytical clarity, I repeat this line below in the section on pedagogical incompetence.

42. This line, too, is repeated below, this time in the section on rhetorical incompetence.
words *puella, ambo,* and *ego* plus the phrases *sed cave* and *ego sum expers* (D1r). Brome’s Prologue—an alter-ego for the pedant—speaks with that same excessively learned specificity, referring to himself as neither *pedagogus* or *hypodidasculus,* but an actor. Brome’s Sarpegg, like Holofernes, prefers words like “synonima” and “facundity” to simpler alternatives and delights in copious variation: “Now deafness seize me. I disclaime my hearing. I defie my audital part. I renounce mine ears” (A6r, B1v). Brome makes the pedant suffer for his pretensions. Not content with gulling Sarpegg once, Crasy returns with a new disguise and a new device that hinges on the schoolmaster’s arrogance. Claiming that the Prince “passionately” approves “the Language, Literature, and Haviour” of Sarpegg’s pupil, Crasy tells him that he has been elevated to a position as the Prince’s tutor, intoxicating him with images of the power he will wield once he is “in place” (D1r). The trick involves pretending that Tobias has asked Sarpegg to make good on a debt of ten pounds using Crasy (disguised) as courier. Not wanting to look poor before the ‘court messenger,’ Sarpegg borrows the money from Pyannet, Crasy’s ill-tempered and thieving mother-in-law, then proceeds to court. Along the way, he borrows more money with which to purchase fine clothes. Despite his outer finery, however, Sarpegg complains of “certain little Cattell of infamous generation”—in other words, lice and fleas—that continually plague him (D4v). Crasy, watching Sarpegg’s strange deportment, calls him a “glorified *Pedant* in his most naturall strut” (D4v). Sarpegg soon encounters the pupil who supposedly sent for him and encourages him to bring him before the Prince. “Set on,” he cries, “His Grace shall see that we can speake true Latin, and construe *Ludovicus vives*” (D5r). Tobias, however, doubts that this is his teacher: “this was never his walke,” he says, “nor these his cloaths” (D5v). His confusion over Sarpegg’s walk suggests the pedant’s slapstick scratching for lice and his unsuccessful attempt to adopt a dignified, courtly gait. When the deception becomes clear, Sarpegg is broken: “The learned is cony-caught; and the lover of *Helicon* is laugh’d at,” he says,
before leaving, as he says, to “cry in private” (D6r). When he returns to the stage, he spouts a curse against learning:

From henceforth *Erit Fluvius Eucalionis*
The world shall flow with dunces; *Regnabitque*, and it shall raine
*Dogmata Polla Sophon*, Dogs and Polecats, and so forth.

... From hence let learning be abomination
'Mong the Plebeians, till their ignorance Shall lead them blinde into the Lake of *Lethe*

... May Peasantry and Idiotism trample
Upon the heads of Art and Knowledge, till The world be shuffled in th’ pristine *Chaos*
(D7v)

Sarpego’s rejection of the learning that has served him so poorly ironically includes comic mistranslation. In the denouement, Sarpego finds himself the only one without a spouse-to-be when his expected partner, Bridget, unexpectedly chooses to marry someone else. Her explanation revolves around his pride:

Would you that have taught Greeke, and whip’t great boyes, come backe to your horn-book, and let down your Gascoines to me, that would, if I had you, bee more tyrannous then any Pedant that ever reign’d since the dayes of *Dionysius*?[?]
(G3r).

Though Bridget suggests that it would be a step backward for Sarpego to marry her, altruism has less to do with her decision than the realization that he would make a poor husband. Despite this setback, Sarpego cannot resist seizing the last word of the play (before delivering the epilogue) to retranslate the other players’ thanks into Latin (G3v).

These pedants’ ostentatious displays follow the amply-documented precedent of Shakespeare’s Holofernes. These ironically ham-fisted rhetorical efforts make the characters ridiculous. Despite the schoolroom’s emphasis on rhetorical training, schoolmasters on stage are bad orators. Brome begins *The City Wit* by invoking the pedant’s bad acting. The Prologue, presumably played by the same actor as Sarpego, is a pompous pedant whose confidence in his own acting
ability is designed to elicit laughter. He begins by disavowing his habitual violence: “You see I come unarm’d among you, sine Virga aut Ferula, without Rod or Ferular, which are the Pedants weapons” (A2r). After invoking the schoolmaster’s most feared weapons, the Prologue explains that he will not be “an Instructor” and has not come “ad erudiendum, nec ad Corrigendum,” (more gratuitous Latin), but rather because “A pedant is not easily imitated” (A2r). Only an actual pedant, he says, can effectively capture a schoolmaster’s “port and state” (A2r). The Prologue even suggests that he is the titular city wit and “a Columne” of the play (A2v-A3r). For maximum comic effect, the pedant’s portrayal must contrast with self-aggrandizing lines like “the terror of my brow” (A2v). Though the Prologue claims that the pedant’s greatness is difficult to imitate, Sarpego’s role as a laughing stock suggests the irony of these lines, and the inarticulateness of his response to Crasy’s second con—his lines are actually given as “Umh,” then “Umh umh”—confirms it (C8v).

The comedy of Brome’s Prologue depends on a mismatch between action—or, rather, acting—and words. His namesake in Chapman’s Gentleman Usher attracts criticism from other characters for the same rhetorical failure. Chapman’s Sarpego makes his debut while urging Duke Alphonso to read a poem he has written. Listening to his son Vincentio read, the Duke cannot find the wit:

VIN. The red fac’d Sunne hath firkt the flundering shades,  
And cast bright ammell on Auroraes brow.  
ALP. High words and strange. Reade on Vincentio.  
VIN. The busky groues that gag-tooth’d boares do shrowd  
With cringle crangle hornes do ring alowd.  
(I.i.179-83)  
Vincentio models a Ciceronian response to Sarpego’s over-wrought poem, demanding appropriate elocution:

VIN. It is strangely good,  
No inkehorne euer did bring forth the like,  
Could these braue prancing words with Actions spurre,
Be ridden throughly, and managed right,
T'would fright the audience, and perhaps delight.

SARP. Doubt you of action sir?
VIN. I, for such stuffe.

SARP. Then know my Lord, I can both act and teach
To any words; when I in Padua schoold it,
I plaid in one of Plautus Comedies,
Namely, Curculio, where his part I acted,
projecting from the poore summe of foure lines,
Forty faire actions.

(I.i.186-97)

Vincentio may or may not give the lines “strangely good” sarcastically. The fixation of his doubt on “action” is, however, telling. It captures his skepticism about two kinds of skills. One is the physical training in gesture and deportment designed to make oration more compelling, of which stage acting is an example. The other is action in the world. Vincentio’s doubt that Sarpego’s actions will be “ridden throughtly and managed right” reflect two Ciceronian failures: the failure to be a good orator and the failure to be the kind of man whose actions matter. Sarpego interprets Vincentio’s skepticism as a challenge to his acting credentials, so he launches into a farcical recitation of the roles he performed during his schooling that burlesques a hero’s battle pedigree. He then moves to demonstration. Entreated by Alphonso to perform the part about which he bragged, Sarpego first asks their pardon in case “in my actions heate, entering / In post post haste I chaunce to take vp / Some of your honord heels” (I.i.199-201). Pogio suggests that he simply skip the frenzied entrance, which strikes Sarpego as both a novel suggestion and an unwelcome constraint. After dressing as a parasite and setting the scene with pedantic enthusiasm, Sarpego delivers his Latin declamation. Alphonso thanks him, insincerely, and invites his lords to evaluate “this stirring action” (I.i.213). Strozza, speaking for the rest, finds it “something harsh upon repletion,” prompting the pedant to boast that he “ventred, being enioynde to eate / Three schollers commons, and yet drewe it neat” (I.i.215-7). He has a chance to reprise this acting later in the play as the narrator of a play-within-the-
play. The couplets in which his lines are delivered mark them as comic, a status confirmed by the
mocking criticism Vincentio and Strozza occasionally interject:

SAR.  Lords of high degree,
And Ladies of low courtesie,
I the Pedant here,
Whom some call schoolmaistere,
Because I can speake best,
Approch before the rest.
VIN.  A Verie good reason.
(II.ii.16-22).

The nobles’ mockery suggests that the actor playing Sarpego should deliver these lines hammily. But his role as an actor also places him on the wrong side of the moral equation. Sarpego urges Margaret, young Vincentio’s lover, to accept Duke Alphonso’s marriage proposal; but the play ultimately unites the young lovers and chastises the Duke for his misplaced lust. This makes Sarpego the advocate for a morally bankrupt proposal—precisely the kind of orator Cicero despised.

The final feature which I will consider is the pedant’s pedagogical incompetence. Heywood’s *How a Man May Choose a Good Wife From a Bad* invests significant stock in the comic potential of Latin instruction. Two characters provide focal points: Aminadab, the pedant, and Pipkin, his student. Both have a poor grasp of Latin. Homophonic puns provide one level of comedy, while another level, accessible only to those who know Latin, depends on the recognition of their errors. The buffoonery begins when Aminadab asks Pipkin why he is late. “Magister, quomodo vales,” answers Pipkin: ‘how are you,’ in other words (C3v). Aminadab, infuriated by this non sequitur, urges the other pupils to strip Pipkin for a beating. The desperate youth, begging for mercy, incongruently cries, “quid est grammatica,” or, ‘what is grammar?’ (C4r). The typical answer was *grammatica est ars literarum*: grammar is the craft of letters. Aminadab, baffled by another apparent non sequitur, demands a clarification. Pipkin’s answer is this: “*Grammatica est*, that if I untrust, you must needs whip / me vpon them, *quid est grammatica*” (C4r). Pipkin’s assertion that his buttocks themselves are

44. Other interjections occur at 2.2.22, 2.2.35, and 2.2.38.
grammatica is a pun: grammatica is ‘ars,’ and Pipkin is to be beaten on his arse. This joke implies an inescapable connection between the study of Latin and a pedant’s rod.

Aminadab offers Pipkin a deal: construe a phrase properly to avoid the beating. Pipkin jumbles the order of the words and translates homophonically, inserting “marybones” for “que maribus” in a translation his teacher dubs “pretty queint, and new” (C4r). Surprisingly, Pipkin issues a counter-challenge, which Aminadab himself proceeds to botch: he translates the phrase “Rostra disertus amat” (an eloquent man loves the podium) as “Disertus a disert, amat, doth loue, rostra, rostmeat” (C4r). “A good construction on an emptie stomack,” replies Pipkin (C4r). Pipkin then excuses himself on the grounds of running errands for his mistress, though not before comically failing another of Aminadab’s tests, this time mixing and misapplying the translations of hog, dog, and frog. This episode ends when one of the other students gleefully chants, “Vitrum glasse, spica grasse, tu es Asinus, you are an Asse” (C4v). There are no lines to indicate Amindab’s response to this jibe. But though he is undoubtedly incompetent, Aminadab at least manages some accurate Latin.

Sharpham’s Master Correction struggles to think in Latin or English. His Latin instruction is literally a joke: to demonstrate his pupils’ competence, he quizzes a child on the word mentula, Latin for ‘penis.’ The child explains that mentula is “a nowne Adiectiue” because “it stands not by himselfe, but it requires another word to be ioyned with it” (K3r). No great subtlety is required to interpret this first joke. The second, a homophonic pun, is no more complex. A student asked to translate the line Iam, iam, Tacturus, Sidera fumma putes responds, “Iam, iam, O Iohn, Iohn, putes, doe thou put, Sidera fumma, Sider in Summer, Tacturus, in Tankerds” (K3r). For this he wins sarcastic applause from the character Wages. The English joke sandwiched between these two Latin gags is rather more baffling. “Marke you Syr,” says Correction to Wages, “I teach both substance and meaning; I doe not teach as your common people, d, o, b, a, b, bottles” (K3r). As near as I can tell, the joke here is that

45. The same dynamic of mutual incompetence pervades the exchange between the two on G2r.
these letters do not spell ‘bottles.’ Though Master Correction assures Wages that he has “taken as much paines with them, as any poet whatsoeuer cold haue don, to make them answere vppon their Q. with good action, distinction, and deliberation” (K3r), it is easily apparent that the opposite is true.

Though incompetent instruction is common among pedants, Correction’s disciplinary laxity is unusual. He never mentions beating. In one anecdote, he recounts an episode in which an official rebuked him for allowing the children to “beray the church-porch” (K3v). “As if I could haue helped it,” he says, explaining that he rebutted the official’s complaints by pointing out that children “would breake out in spite of his nose, or the best mans nose in the parrish” (K3v). Noses, as John Kerrigan has shown, could be construed as phallic, and Correction’s leap to mentula just prior to this would certainly have primed listeners to keep one ear cocked for puns.46 His inability to maintain order is confirmed when he must twice parenthetically order the boys to be quiet during his conversation with Wages. The command’s repetition suggests its failure. But the most egregious examples of Correction’s stupidity are his patently absurd syllogisms.47 Correction describes “a great disputation” he had with a man over whether “a foole or a wiseman made the best Lawyer” (K3v). Having “most Scholasticallie stood for the foole” (without doubt a double entendre), Correction argues that “your wiseman (said I) vseth few words, your Foole much babling: your best Lawyers vse much babling. Ergo your fooles make your best Lawyers” (K3v). Wages feigns admiration, begging to know if the opponent was able to answer this point. “O I,” says Correction:

and confuted me too, onelye by reason of a scuruey olde prouerbe, which saies, Children and fooles do alwaies tell true: but your best Lawyers doe not alwaies tell true, ergo: your fooles make not your best Lawyers, a most strong and strange


47. Shakespeare frequently deployed syllogism to comic effect, and we shall see Middleton do the same in Chaste Maid. See Craig, “Shakespeare and Formal Logic” for examples.
Wages understandably changes the subject at this point, entreating a play day for Correction’s students. The teacher responds with a rhetorically absurd display of chiasmus: “Dionisius ille Tiranus Siciliae crudelissimus crudelissimus Siciliae Triannus ille Dionisius: saies to one of his pupils: huc ades, haec animo concips dicta tuo” (K4r). If the chiasmus is Correction’s attempt to show off his mastery of the oratorical toolkit, it certainly fails to achieve its goal. But it introduces for us another of the pedant’s comic features: his penchant for classical allusions.

Holofernes’ classical allusions turned out to be primarily rhetorically incompetent: they baffled Goodman Dull and opened him to mockery for pretension from the assembled nobles. Because the allusions I examine here are factual errors that call the pedant’s qualifications into question, I have classified them as instances of pedagogical incompetence. Their comedy depends on being delivered in a pretentious tone and on being nonsensical, but also, paradoxically, on the success of the curriculum itself: the jokes will not land if no one can recognize what they refer to. These instances of incompetence provide examples of playwrights’ debt to the curriculum as a source for content even as their mockery implies antipathy toward teachers. Heywood’s Aminadab, for instance, cites a line written by “Tully in his Aesop’s Fables,” granting him the impressively dubious distinction of failing to recognize that Aesop, not Cicero, wrote Aesop’s Fables (F1v). No one in the audience would find this funny if they were not themselves aware of the distinction.

Brome amplifies this kind of joke in The City Wit. The episode in which Crary menaces Sarpego with a sword begins with formulaic references to Phoebus and Helicon intended to mock the pedantic obsession with classical precedent (B4r). A more extensive example occurs earlier in the play. When Crary begs Sarpego to repay the “dribble of ten pound” he owes, the pedant deflects with a classical anecdote: “Diogenes Laertius, on a cernaine time, demanding of Cornelius Tacitus, an Areopagit of Syracuse, what was the most commodious and expeditest method to kill the itch, answered—” (B1v).
Sarpego’s anecdote is nonsense. Diogenes Laertius was the third century A.D. author of *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, while Cornelius Tacitus lived during the first century A.D. and is not known to have been an Areopagite of Syracuse (n5869, n5870). When Sarpego ends the conversation by advising Crasy to follow his “Lanthorne,” he introduces two more jokes (B2r). The simpler of the two is the aural invocation of horns via lanthorne: a cuckold joke. The second is more complex: though Sarpego seeks to equate Crasy’s request for compensation with Diogenes’ absurd and futile efforts, he underscores his own incompetence by mixing up his Diogenes just as he jumbled the lifetimes of Diogenes Laertius and Cornelius Tacitus. It is Diogenes the Cynic, a Greek philosopher who lived in the fourth century B.C., who famously went looking for an honest man while holding a lantern in broad daylight, not Diogenes Laertius. Given the precedent of pedantic ignorance set by Master Correction and Aminadab, this is likely a deliberately farcical moment and not carelessness on Brome’s part.

This completes the list of dramatic features playwrights typically attached to stock pedants. Middleton drew on many of these features to make Tim and his Tutor, two university caricatures in *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside*, appear proud, foolish, and stupid. The extension of these features to this comic pair provides grounds for accepting the existence of a loosely affiliated stage category of scholarly figures. This move is important because it substantiates my claim that the vices which characterized the pedant and his dramatic feature as laughingstock are shared by other figures who could, within the period, have intelligibly been called ‘scholars.’ This similarity of dramatic characterization and function among scholarly figures suggests at the very least a latent dislike for scholarly figures (not only pedants) among playwrights and audiences, and possibly an antipathy toward them.

48. I follow Elizabeth Schafer’s invocation of Catherine Shaw’s interpretation of this joke: see n5869.
Jokes at Tim’s expense play on both academic stereotypes and on specific curricular jokes. Tim’s first scene foregrounds his ridiculous awkwardness around women. Maudlin, his mother, prefaces Tim’s introduction to a circle of townspeople by warning them that he “wants nothing but audacity,” which he promptly proves (3.2.122). Realizing that he has been shown into a room full of women, Tim cries “Oh, I’m betrayed!” and flees (3.2.131). His embarrassed mother blames university culture for his reaction: “In the university they’re kept still to men and ne’er trained up to women’s company” (3.2.133-5). Once coaxed back into the room, however, Tim reveals his hubris. “Come I from Cambridge, and offer me six plums?...Served like a child, when I have answered under bachelor?” he asks indignantly (3.2.141, 3.2.154-5). Caught up in his sense of self-importance, he remains entrenched in the formal conventions of university arts. This creates an opportunity for jokes that trade on a more particular knowledge of the curriculum and of academic language and conventions. When Maudlin asks if Tim has brought the tutor “up” to London, he leaps at the chance to apply university logic: “I ha’ not brought him up; he stands at door. Negatur. There’s logic to begin with you, mother” (3.2.146-8). He even tries to convince his mother to stop calling him Tim and adopt Cambridge formality: “‘Tim!’ Hark you: ‘Timothius,’ mother, ‘Timothius’” (3.2.177). Maudlin is unimpressed. “How now, Tim?” she demands, “Will not your old tricks yet be left?...shall I deny your name? ‘Timothius,’ quoth he? Faith, there’s a name! ‘Tis my son Tim, forsooth” (3.2.152-3, 3.2.178-9). His tutor’s claim to have “brought [Tim] in league with logic and read the Dunces to him” until they “flow naturally from him” make the young man’s pretensions more laughable, since John Duns Scotus’s name had – thanks to the humanists - become widely associated with dullness and irrelevance (3.2.164-5, 3.2.168, n8 p1485).

Specifically curricular jokes are involved in the remainder of Tim’s scenes – an illustration of the extent to which the mockery of scholarly figures depends on the audience’s familiarity with the curriculum itself. Maudlin asks Tim to remind her of a particular word from the answer to the
question “Quid est grammatica?” (4.1.72-3) Tim gives the Latin answer, *ars est grammatica*, and Maudlin is overjoyed to recognize the beautiful word ‘ars’ and acknowledge her son as a “deep scholar” (4.1.78). This joke parallels Pipkin’s phrase about being whipped upon that which was *grammatica*. Middleton’s mockery of academic conventions follows the precedent set by Shakespeare and Sharpham and moves to encompass syllogism. Tim and his tutor engage in a formally coherent twenty-four-line Latin debate about whether a fool is a rational creature or not. Anyone in possession of a Latin vocabulary and an ounce of pragmatism could have recognized the disputation’s absurdity, while those left in the dark about the words’ meaning could appreciate Maudlin’s exasperated interjection: “your reasons are both good, whate’er they be; pray give them o’er” (4.1.25-6). This debate initiates a joke whose punchline lands in the final act. Maudlin, who wonders why Tim spends his time disputing such a subject when “none of us all but knows what a fool is,” has an answer ready when her son challenges her to prove it: a fool is “one that’s married before he has wit” (4.1.29-30, 4.1.32). The play’s conclusion proves Tim just such a fool. But he spares no effort to prove it before then. His blithe assertion that “’Tis the easiest thing to prove a fool by logic” is amply supported by his own reliance on that art (4.1.39-40). He, too, sets up a joke to be completed in the final act with his claim that “by logic I’ll prove anything,” even “a whore to be an honest woman,” a boast which Maudlin recalls, and he abandons, in his final humiliation (4.1.39-42, 5.4.107-9, 5.4.114-5). Anxious to ensure that the Welsh Gentlewoman understands him, Tim addresses her “as well as a man might do” in Latin (4.1.100-122, 4.1.141). Baffled by her Welsh, which he calls “Hebrew,” Tim concludes that she must be “a good scholar” who “has the tongues” and must even have “proceeded” (to earn a degree), laughable assumptions that juxtapose his incompetence and the incomprehensibility of scholarly discourse even among supposed scholars (4.1.125-8, 4.1.143). Tim bursts into the play’s final scene enraged by revelations about the Welsh Gentlewoman’s sexual history that prove him a fool by his mother’s definition. Having tried and
failed to reconcile himself to his marriage with logic, he dismisses both “marriage and logic” and promises to love the Welsh Gentlewoman “for her wit” (5.4.115, 5.4.120-22). By this time, Tim has been gullible, misread social situations, clung to academic arcana, and flaunted his Latin. In other words, he fulfills the key comic functions of a stock pedant.

These characters reveal that the mockery of stock comic pedants in English drama was part of a larger trend of negative attitudes toward scholarly figures that was defined by its deviation from the Ciceronian values of action and virtue. The comic potential of this stock class depends on the vices of cowardice, gluttony, and hubris attributed to its members and their rhetorical and pedagogical incompetence. These are in conflict with the precepts Cicero established in *De Officiis*: that moral men concern themselves with “deeds, not fame” (I.xix.65); that they practice “steadfastness, temperance, self-control, and considerateness of others” (I.xxviii.98); that they do things “arduous and laborious and fraught with danger” (I.xx.66); and that they not “devote too much industry and too deep study to matters that are obscure and difficult and useless as well” (I.vi.19). Recovering the extent of Cicero’s influence on the drama allows us to better assess the intellectual climate within which knowledge workers were situated in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and emphasizes the theater’s role in the propagation of antipathy for scholars. The mockery through which this antipathy was encouraged often depended, paradoxically, on the curriculum itself. Many of the jokes required familiarity with the curriculum among the audience and, of course, on the part of the authors. The next step in a history of anti-intellectualism in this period would involve integrating this literary, theatrical account into a much broader survey of Ciceronian formulations of anti-intellectual sentiments across a variety of texts. I will close with an example. Writing in *The Advancement of Learning*, Francis Bacon attempts to rehabilitate the term ‘pedant,’ which has become a label by which “politique men extenuate and disable learned men,” and attempts to refute the popular opinion that:
learning doth soften men’s minds, and makes them more unapt for the honour and exercise of arms; that it doth mar and pervert men’s dispositions for matter of government and policy, in making them too curious and irresolute by variety of reading, or too peremptory or positive by strictness of rules and axioms, or too immoderate and overweening by reason of the greatness of examples…that it doth divert men’s travails from action and business, and bringeth them to a love of leisure and privateness; and that it doth bring into states a relaxation of discipline, whilst every man is more ready to argue than to obey and execute.49

These are Ciceronian complaints. Engaging in contemplation, according to the men Bacon cites, does more than distract men from civic contribution: it renders them unfit for it. A few pages later, Bacon adduces the scornful depiction of pedants on stage as evidence of the general contempt for learning.50 It was clear to Bacon that the drama’s contribution to the mockery of scholars had contributed to an intellectual dearth. With hindsight, we can see that dramatic representations of scholarly figures depended on precedents provided by the curriculum itself.


50. Ibid., 18.
REFERENCES


