

what Jonson, Gabriel Harvey, and their ilk did think of grammar school and even university graduates. They were only "learned grammarians." And that is exactly the attitude we learned gentlemen customarily take to the learning of high school or even of university graduates today.

Rowe's conclusion is thus not a tradition, but his own clearly erroneous inference, based fundamentally upon a misinterpretation of Jonson. This misinterpretation, indeed, as we have seen at tedious length, was traditional long before the time of Rowe. If Rowe had any other grounds, he did not allege them, and we have no right to assume them. His fundamental statement is that of Jonson; and that statement implies positively almost a complete grammar school education, and gives negatively no indication against a fully complete one.

As we now see, the "little Latin," "little learning" tradition rests squarely and solely on Jonson's "small *Latine*, and lesse *Greeke*" statement. As contemporaries knew, Jonson's own statement needs a considerable correction for "personal equation." But even taken literally, though in its context, it grants to Shakspeare what we would now consider a fair command of Latin. Pre-Restoration critics, while minimizing the importance of it, yet did not deny him that. And when the Restoration critics took Jonson's phrase out of its context and even perverted its form to make their interpretation more derogatory, one of the elder generation, who knew, William Beeston, raised his voice in unavailing protest, and gave as proof the specific fact that Shakspeare had been a schoolmaster in the country.

Even Rowe in 1709 does not deny Shakspeare some Latin, acquired by his having been "for some time at a Free-School." Rowe continues,

*It is without Controversie, that he had no knowledge of the Writings of the Antient Poets, not only from this Reason, but from his Works themselves, where we find no traces of anything that looks like an Imitation of 'em; the Delicacy of his Taste, and the natural Bent of his own Great Genius, equal, if not superior to some of the best of theirs, would certainly have led him to Read and Study 'em with so much Pleasure, that some of their fine Images would naturally have insinuated themselves into, and been mix'd with his own Writings; so that his not copying at least something from them, may be an Argument of his never having read 'em. Whether his Ignorance of the Antients were a disadvantage to him or no, may admit of a Dispute: For tho' the knowledge of 'em might have made him more Correct, yet it is not improbable but that the Regularity and Deference for them, which*