

his fellows. We thus have no indication that Shakspeare read Seneca's plays in the original. Nor do I find any evidence worth repeating that Shakspeare had read English Seneca.

One of the passages which Shakspeare reflects had wide currency through the *Flores* on grammar school circles. But Shakspeare is not likely to have read Seneca himself in grammar school. For the plays come in with the vogue of Senecan philosophy in the seventeenth century, but Seneca in any extended form seldom appears in the grammar schools of the sixteenth century. The Senecan rhetoric is mentioned with other standards at Rivington in 1566. Paul's had the Seneca of Erasmus in its library in 1582-83, but it is not clear whether it was the tragedies or the *Opera*. Ruthin in 1574 and Aldenham in 1600 are the only places known to me where the reference seems clearly to the tragedies. Curiously enough, both of these curricula have Westminster connections. And we happen to know that Dean Nowell when at Westminster was interested in Seneca's tragedies. In his notebook is a prologue for Seneca's *Hippolytus* at Westminster, probably the Christmas of 1546.<sup>46</sup> It was Dean Goodman of Westminster who took the curriculum of Westminster as a basis for that at Ruthin in 1574. And the curriculum at Aldenham in 1600 is also based upon the Westminster curriculum. It looks as if Westminster was the grammar school center of propagation for Seneca in the sixteenth century, though Seneca is not mentioned in its own curriculum. But the curricula indicate that the propagation had not extended far. Yet, as we have seen, there was a reprint at London, 1589, of the previous edition of Seneca by Gryphius. There was evidently some demand in England by that date. In the seventeenth century, there were to be many editions.

It is highly unlikely that Shakspeare had anything more than *sententiae* from Seneca in grammar school, and as yet we have no convincing evidence that he ever had any considerable direct acquaintance with Seneca at any time. We will do well to remember here that the rage for Senecan tragedies, as Seneca, had passed before Shakspeare began writing tragedies, and that already such tragedy was popular Seneca at its fullest height, which is rather a different thing. The very most that can be claimed for any of Shakspeare's tragedies is that it is popular Seneca; no one of them aimed to be true Seneca. So early as 1589, Nashe had laughed out of court those who read English Seneca by candle light—not having read him in

<sup>46</sup> Bodleian Library; MS. Brasenose Coll. 31, pp. 11r ff.