Georgius Macropedius. *Two Comedies. Rebelles and Bassarus*. Edited and translated from the Latin, with Introductions, by Yehudi Lindeman. (Bibliotheca Humanistica & Reformatonica XXXVI). Nieuskoop: B. de Graaf, 1983. Pp. 215 f. 75.

Macropedius (1487–1558) – or Joris van Lancvelt in the vernacular – is a most significant yet overlong neglected figure in the history of European drama, and that importance will be discussed later in this review. There are other aspects of his work and career that are significant for sixteenth-century studies, and these merit our attention also.

One of the Brethren of the Common Life, Frater Joris became a priest (which was unusual among the Brethren) and a teacher (which was not, though theirs was by no means an exclusively teaching community); and he spent most of his life at Liège, Utrecht and 's-Hertogenbosch – all centers of Brethren of Common Life activity. All his theatrical works were published during his years at Utrecht. Twenty years younger than Erasmus (who like Frater Joris had studied with the Brethren in 's-Hertogenbosch) and manifesting much of the Erasmian programme, he was teacher and principal of the school of the Brethren in Utrecht, where his dramatic works were part of his work. At a time when controversies between Roman Catholics and Protestant reformers were heating up, Frater Joris appears not only to have survived during the stormy years of controversy, but to have flourished.

Among his works are the two school-plays reviewed here, and also his *Hecastus*, a *burgerman* version of *Everyman/Elckerlijc* with much witty dialogue. *Hecastus* was widely performed in the original Latin and in translations and adaptations, not only in the Low Countries but into the lands of the Holy Roman Empire. There were several later plays as well: *Adamust* (1552), a humanistic mystery play, and his last play of 1556, *Jesus scholasticus*, an interesting play about the twelve-year-old Jesus, are two exemplars.

The *Rebelles* (1535) is a Plautine comedy – complete with the now-conventional divisions into acts and scenes and other conventions of Roman comedy – and it is about two schoolboys who misbehave. It has interest consequently as “the first play to make life in the school a subject for the stage,” and it looks forward to a half-century of school drama – down to Nicholas Frischlin at Strassburg in the last quarter of the century – with its still-untold story of convention and experiment, of training audiences in classical traditions, and of advancing the cause of Neo-Latin. We have given attention to drama and religious controversy (though that not yet adequately), but not enough to drama and pedagogy, and there are many questions still unanswered: how were the plays used in the schools?; how closely did the performances integrate with teaching (e.g., did students come to perceive Plautine elements in the school-plays and relate that to their reading of Plautus?); and to what extent did all students participate in the performances?

The *Bassarus* (1540) features a typical Roman trickster, the clever slave, who has affinities with such folk figures as the Flemish Reynaert and the German Tyl Eulenspiegel. But there are more sombre undertones: two thieves hanged on Shrove Tuesday morning generate gallows-humour and the medieval *memento mori*. This play is one that evokes the contrastive colourings of Hieronymus Bosch

(a painter much celebrated in 's-Hertogenbosch) and Breughel: Kindermann has compared him to Pieter Breughel in his 1959 study of *Theatergeschichte Europas*.

Thirty years ago Leicester Bradner wrote on "The Latin Drama of the Renaissance" (*Stud. in the Ren.*, 1957) and praised Macropedius' dramatic entertainment as "one of the high spots of the neo-Latin drama." We still have not yet fully recovered a sense of the achievement of that drama: its range, sophistication, and bearings for the vernacular drama. (On Neo-Latin and the vernacular literatures, see my *Intertextuality and Renaissance Texts*, 1984.) These plays must be seen as central to that endeavour.

The editorial procedures are in accordance with scholarly practice, and the editor has made use of the editions of 1535, 1537, 1540, and 1553 for the *Rebelles*, and 1540², 1541, and 1553 for the *Bassarus*. Such variants as *feliciter* and *foeliciter* have been recorded with a view to their importance for a fuller understanding of Renaissance orthography; and other variants of no substantive significance have been sensibly ignored. Certain older usages (p. 16) have been preserved, for there is clearly a place for maintaining sixteenth-century orthography in its distinctiveness from both classical and medieval practices and from mechanical twentieth-century normalizations.

The translation is lively enough (as it should be for this kind of drama), and one can read the plays with understanding and pleasure and without any sense of awkwardness. The philosophy of translation is expressed interestingly as the "goal to keep that spirit inside the receptor language, even if it meant that it sometimes had to be added *ex nihilo* from the general spirit of the source language, rather than from its literal meaning" (p. 17); yet this aim leads to some intrusions.

Unfortunately, there is no index, but the decision not to include the Prefaces of the plays in my view is a more serious omission. Thus the Preface to the edition of the *Aluta* and the *Rebelles* speaks (p. 19 n. 2) of the influence of Reuchlin in restoring the "decaying art of comedy" – for Reuchlin's Latin farce *Henno* (1498) had its vogue, and as a teacher of ancient languages Reuchlin's influence in the Low Countries and the Rhineland was very great, and it was Reuchlin, Macropedius writes, who "first opened the door to write" ("is mihi primus, ut verum fatear, ansam scribendi dedit"). Prefaces are vital parts of Renaissance works, and they should be read for a number of reasons: for a sense of the immediate context of the work, for the author's sense of audience, and sometimes for glosses upon a work itself and its *Nachleben*.

Much more editing and translating of the still-neglected individual works of Neo-Latin drama is needed so that we can move in due time to the full history not only of Neo-Latin literature but of the larger history of the Renaissance. This edition by Professor Lindeman must be welcomed as a valuable part of that enterprise.

R.J. SCHOECK, *University of Colorado*