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An Old Author in the New World

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Published in:
The New England Quarterly

DOI:
[10.1162/tneq_a_00735](https://doi.org/10.1162/tneq_a_00735)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2019

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Delwiche, T. R. (2019). An Old Author in the New World: Terence, Samuel Melyen, and the Boston Latin School c. 1700. *The New England Quarterly*, 92(2), 263-292. https://doi.org/10.1162/tneq_a_00735

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Memoranda and Documents

AN OLD AUTHOR IN THE NEW WORLD: TERENCE, SAMUEL MELYEN, AND THE BOSTON LATIN SCHOOL C. 1700

THEODORE R. DELWICHE

IT was a dark, dingy room. The windows creaked as they turned on their poorly greased hinges in the dead of winter. A large fireplace in the corner did what it could to fight off the persistent cold seeping through the glass panes while puffing thick, black clouds of smoke through the room. Through that fog appeared Ezekiel Cheever. “Do you see the venerable schoolmaster, severe in aspect, with a black skullcap on his head, like an ancient Puritan, and the snow of his white beard drifting down to his very girdle?” The famed seventeenth-century schoolmaster scurried through the room, ordering “a row of queer-looking little fellows, wearing square-skirted coats” to take their seats. Class had begun. The lesson for the day was Virgil, the poor poet whose verses “which he took so much pain to polish have been misscanned, and misparsed, by so many generations of idle school-boys.” There, in the back of the room sat two of those indolent children, whose foolery would not escape the notice of their schoolteacher. “The two malefactors [were] summoned

This essay derives from research conducted for my 2018 senior thesis at Harvard College. Due gratitude is extended for the incredible generosity of the Harvard College Research Program and the Classics Department’s Finley Fellowship, both of which afforded me many summer months of quiet reading in Massachusetts. They say it takes a village to raise a child; so too does it to produce a thesis. Innumerable thanks to the incomparable advisers of Ann Blair and Massimo Ce. Thank you also to Mou Banerjee, David Hall, Carla Heelan, Alan Niles, Chloe Reichel, Julian Yolles, the History 99 tutorial members, the Massachusetts Historical Society staff, and all family and friends. I am additionally grateful to the editors and reviewers of *The New England Quarterly* for many helpful comments on earlier drafts.

The New England Quarterly, vol. XCII, no. 2 (June 2019). © 2019 by The New England Quarterly. All rights reserved. https://doi.org/10.1162/tneq_a_00735.

before the master's chair, wherein he sits with the terror of a judge upon his brow . . . Thwack! Thwack! Thwack!"¹

So Nathaniel Hawthorne recounts the storied history of Boston schoolmaster Ezekiel Cheever. The nineteenth-century fictionist had set out to pen engaging but supposedly accurate historical tales for children. Given his didactic purpose, Hawthorne recounts that he had "endeavored to keep a distinct and unbroken thread of authentic history." Still, he admits, "the author, it is true, has sometimes assumed the license of filling up the outline of history with details for which he has none but imaginative authority." Hawthorne found the task of extracting children's tales from Puritan history difficult. Crucial ingredients were lacking as if to bake a cake with no sugar. In the author's own judgement, the somber, stern, and rigid characteristics of the Puritans and their descendants rendered their history granite rocks from which the novelist sought to "manufacture delicate playthings."²

Contemporaries of Hawthorne did not necessarily agree with such a grim intellectual assessment of seventeenth-century New England. A Boston Latin School alumnus praised his school's origins and character which focused on a decidedly classical curriculum that "far from alienating us from our own world, teaches us to discern the amiable traits in it, and the genuine achievements . . . amid so many distracting problems."³ Such nineteenth-century admiration for early schooling in New England focused more on the celebration of an ideal than on critical, historical scholarship.⁴ In the twentieth century some historians began investigating what occurred inside the Puritan schoolroom.⁵ What did students learn? How did they interact with

¹Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Whole History of Grandfather's Chair or True Stories from New England History, 1620–1803* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1896), 81–83.

²Hawthorne, *Grandfather's Chair*, xxv, xvi.

³George Santanaya quoted in Pauline Holmes *A Tercentenary History of the Boston Public Latin School, 1635–1935* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1970), 2.

⁴Meyer Reinhold, "Survey of the Scholarship on Classical Traditions in Early America," in *Classical Traditions in Early America: Essays*, ed. John Eadie (Ann Arbor: Center for Coordination of Ancient and Modern Studies, University of Michigan, 1976), 5. Reinhold mentions that few beyond Cornell professor Moses Coit Tyler studied classical reception in early America. Those who did, in Reinhold's judgement, were "mostly amateurs, [who] wrote our early history as a filiopietistic hobby" (5).

⁵Examples of twentieth-century scholarship on grammar schools include George Emery Littlefield, *Early Schools and School-books of New England* (Boston: The Club of Odd Volumes, 1904); Richard Boyd Ballou, "The Grammar Schools in Seventeenth-Century Colonial America" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1940); Kenneth B. Murdock, "The Teaching of Latin and Greek at the Boston Latin School in 1712,"

the classics? What were the religious considerations and motivations of schooling? In his 1975 survey of the scholarship on the classical tradition in early America, Meyer Reinhold contends the “aims, curriculum, teaching methods, textbooks of the American grammar schools are thoroughly known.” Reinhold’s claim stands out as curiously confident, especially as he later argues for the necessity of further study on student attitudes towards the classics, “a subject on which almost nothing has so far been written about.”⁶

Focusing on the granular notes of a single student, this article travels with Hawthorne back to the frigid colonial schoolhouse. Samuel Melyen’s overlooked school notebook that begins in 1689 offers a glimpse into a New England teenage boy’s world of learning. The entries in this notebook, identified and placed in their historical context via other seventeenth-century sources such as book market receipts, curricular accounts, and diary entries, reveal a New England grammar school education that mirrored early modern European practices. This particular student and his schoolmaster made use of popular grammar textbooks, classical texts, and phrasebooks of the time. In this sense, a Puritan classical education was no renegade, avant-garde project; it did not break cleanly from traditional models. Melyen’s notes show how the grammar school education blended the practice of Latinity with divinity. That education, while employing classical literature, did not teach Latin for Latin’s sake. Melyen took pains to copy neatly, though sometimes imperfectly, his Latin notes, but their English translations were always close at hand, dutifully transcribed in the left column facing the Latin. Both through the vernacular and the Roman tongue, a schoolmaster reinforced religious messages, adapting plots taken from Terence, the Roman playwright, to more pious ends. And the schoolboy, in turn, developed time-honored practices of reading and notetaking.

Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts 27 (1932): 21–29; Robert Middlekauff, “A Persistent Tradition: The Classical Curriculum in Eighteenth-Century New England,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 18 (1961): 54–67; and John E. Rexine, “The Boston Latin School Curriculum in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: A Bicentennial Review,” *Classical Journal* 72 (1977): 261–66. See also Elizabeth Porter Gould, *Ezekiel Cheever, Schoolmaster* (Boston: The Palmer Company, 1904). For a discussion of a grammar textbook published after Cheever’s death, and attributed to him, see John Latimer and Kenneth Murdock, “The Author of Cheever’s *Accidence*,” *Class. Jour.* 46 (1951): 391–97.

⁶Reinhold, “Survey of the Scholarship on Classical Traditions,” 23, 26.

The Notebook: Author and Context

Samuel Melyen was by no means remarkable when it came to his educational performance. Born in New York to a wealthy Dutch family that later moved to Boston around 1690, he had a penchant for mischief and profligacy.⁷ Because of these characteristics, Melyen makes a brief appearance in the scholarship on New England education. Set to graduate Harvard College last in the class of 1696, Melyen appealed to Cotton Mather to intercede on his behalf to boost his class rank in the yet-to-be-published commencement catalogue:

I am very sorry (and desire to be very penitent) that in that, as well as in many other things, I have displeased so worthy a gentleman as the President and so kind a tutor as Mr. Leverett with the Rev. Mr. Brattle, [and I am] hoping that the remainder of my days may be so managed that glory may redound to God, and [that] thereby some satisfaction may be made for the wrong I offered them. I lie at their feet and humbly beg their pardon.⁸

Melyen emphasized that “nothing, sir, can be more grateful to my father and mother.”⁹ Unfortunately, Mather was unswayed, as Melyen appeared last in the eight-student class of 1696.¹⁰ Despite his low performance, Melyen spent his post-graduation years following a similar life trajectory as his classmates. He received his MA three years after his BA, taught for a period at a grammar school, was ordained, and married.¹¹ When Melyen died in 1711, he left his books to a local family.¹² No complete record of those literary possessions

⁷Clifford K. Shipton, *Biographical Sketches of Those Who Attended Harvard College in the Classes 1690–1700 with Bibliographical and Other Notes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), 298.

⁸Samuel Melyen to Cotton Mather, May 19, 1698, in *Remarkable Providences: Readings on Early American History*, ed. John Demos (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1991), 247. Melyen is a frequent source among historians debating whether status or academic performance determined the ranking system at Harvard College. See Samuel Eliot Morison, *Harvard College in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), 1:62–65. Morison asserts, albeit it on thin evidence, that it was intellectual merit and not family status that determined a student's rank. Morison takes up the question in greater depth in “Precedence at Harvard College in the Seventeenth Century,” *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 42 (1932): 371–431 (hereafter *AAS Proceedings*).

⁹Melyen to Mather, May 19, 1698, 247.

¹⁰Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana: Or, The Ecclesiastical History of New-England from Its First Planting in the Year 1620 unto the Year of Our Lord 1698* (1702: repr. New York: Arno Press, 1972), 4:139.

¹¹Shipton, *Biographical Sketches of Harvard College*, 300.

¹²William Nelson, *Calendar of New Jersey Wills* (Patterson, NJ: Press Printing and Publishing, 1901), 1:316.

survives, but the 1689 notebook of Melyen's remains intact at the Massachusetts Historical Society.¹³

The notebook itself comprises roughly a hundred pages. Just as a schoolchild might today, Melyen scratches rough, stick-figure drawings in the leather front and back covers.¹⁴ Aside from these playful etchings, the manuscript contains transcriptions of English Puritan poetry and Latin language notes. While Melyen signs his name and the year, 1689, he does not indicate his location. Nevertheless, the fourteen-year-old's habit of chronicling contemporary events indicates that his family had likely completed its move from New York to Boston by 1689 since Melyen seems to have an interest in and grasp of court proceedings that happened around Boston in that very year, be it a husband accused of murdering his wife or a group of marauding pirates captured and eventually executed.¹⁵ Melyen's access to information about events in Boston and the family's move around this time¹⁶ indicates that the notebook and its author were in Boston by 1689.

Melyen's notes confirm earlier, disparate accounts of a New England grammar school education. In his autobiography addressed to his son, Cotton Mather detailed his education thus: "[A]t the Age of a little more than Eleven Years, I had composed many Latin Exercises, both in Prose and in Verse, and could Speak Latin so readily, that I could Write Notes of Sermons after the English Preacher, in it. I had Conversed with Cato, Corderius, Terence, Tully, Ovid,

¹³As far as I have gathered, the only record of Melyen's signature in any extant printed book is found in John Arrowsmith's *Tactica Sacra, Sive, De Milite Spirituali Pugnante, Vincente, & Triumphante Dissertatio, Tribus Libris Comprehensa*. (Cambridge, UK: Joannes Field, 1657). That edition, housed in Princeton's library, bears the label: "Samuelis Melyen Liber." Nonetheless, given its institutional seat, the work is better known for another signature, namely that of Jonathan Dickinson (1688–1747), the first president of the College of New Jersey. Upon the occasion of Princeton president Shirley Tilghman's retirement in 2013, a group of alumni donated the 1657 *Tactica Sacra* to the library, more for the Dickinson connection than the Melyen one.

¹⁴Samuel Melyen, *Commonplace book*, 1689, Ms. SBd-7, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, MA.

¹⁵Melyen, *Commonplace book*. Melyen does not refer to the murderer by name but mentions Thomas Hawkings and Thomas Pound, two pirates captured, charged, tried, and executed in 1689. See "Deposition of Thomas Pound, The Pirate, 1689," *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* (1891) 45: 215–17.

¹⁶Evan Haefeli, "Dutch New York and the Salem Witch Trials: Some New Evidence," *AAS Proceedings* (2000): 110:285.

and Virgil. I had Made Epistles and Themes.”¹⁷ With the anglicized “Tully,” Mather refers to the famed Roman statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero. “Corderius,” on the other hand, signifies Mathurin Cordier, a sixteenth-century teacher of Calvin who authored many children’s works, most notably his *Colloquia*, which appeared in bilingual English and Latin editions in the mid-seventeenth century.¹⁸ Mather’s outline of his grammar school education maps neatly onto Melyen’s as well as onto select parts of official accounts of the Boston Latin School, founded in 1635.

In a 1712 letter, Nathaniel Williams, the headmaster of the Latin School, wrote to Nehemiah Hobart, President of the Harvard Corporation, and offered the earliest and most complete account of the colonial classical curriculum. During the first three years of a seven-year grammar school course, boys used Cato, Aesop, and Corderius as guides and were tasked with “learning by heart” Latin forms and paradigms as well as mastering English syntactical rules. For the fourth year, “they are entered upon Erasmus to which they are allou’d no English, but are taught to translate it by the help of the Dictionary and Accidence.” Students also began Ovid’s *Tristia* reciting parts of it by heart. Each boy crafted a translation of the assigned reading bringing it to his tutor for constant correction. From the fifth to seventh year, students greatly expanded their repertoire of classical authors, reading Ovid, Cicero, Virgil, Juvenal, Persius, and Horace, thereafter using these authors as models to hone composition skills in prose and poetry. Greek studies, focusing on Hesiod, Homer, and Isocrates, began in the sixth year as did occasional Friday afternoon dialogues. In the final quarter of the seventh year, “every fortnight [students] compose a Theme, & now & then turn a Theme into a Declamation.” In short, students would have supposedly mastered Latin, making use of a wide array of classical authors, along with contemporary phrase-books, exercise books, and florilegia.¹⁹

¹⁷Cotton Mather, *Paterna: The Autobiography of Cotton Mather*, ed. Ronald A. Bosco (Delmar, NY: Scholars’ Fascimiles & Reprints, 1976), 7.

¹⁸Charles Hoole, *Maturini Corderii Colloquia Scholastica Anglo-Latina* (London: Excudebat S.G. Pro Societate Stationariorum, 1657).

¹⁹Accidences were rudimentary language instruction books that focused primarily on morphology and basic case usages. The quotations are from Williams to Hobart, 1712 in John Rexine, “The Boston Latin School Curriculum in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: A Bicentennial Review,” *Class. Jour.* 72 (1977): 261–66. Williams cites the use of “Mr. Garretson’s Exercises,” likely referring to John Garretson’s *English Exercises for School-Boys to Translate into Latin Comprising all the Rules of*

Though some historians have taken Williams's account at face value, stated curricula are, after all, only approximations—and wishful ones at that—of any academic reality.²⁰ As any London traveler well knows, we must always mind the gap between a schoolmaster's pedagogical platform and a student's quotidian practice. The headmaster of a grammar school funneling students into nearby Harvard likely would not have disparaged his academic program to the College's corporation members. Despite the fact that few particulars are known about the specific context and occasion of the letter, the communication indicates at least some level of concern from Harvard leaders about the state of learning at the Latin School. The timing of the missive, 1712, *per se* may indicate that this concern was not an idle curiosity but rather indicative of serious worry from Boston residents and even Harvard leaders. Just one year before, at "a meeting of free-holders and other inhabitants of the town of Boston," the Latin School came under intense scrutiny from town selectmen who believed that while European students attained competent proficiency in Latin in a year, "many hundreds of boyes in this Town, who by their Parents were never designed for a more Liberal Education, have Spent two, three, four years or more of their more Early days at the Lattin School, which hath proved of very Little, or no benefit as to their after Accomplishment."²¹

The sundry community members who raised the complaint clearly were concerned about the usefulness of a grammar school education, of sending their children "never designed for a more Liberal education" to years of Latin and Greek study. Indeed, throughout the seventeenth century, this question of the "benefit" of humane education cropped up frequently in English contexts. Focusing primarily on late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England but making select references to the New World, John Morgan comments that "in an era of growing emphasis on the glory of the ancients, of expanding school facilities, and the publication of cheap print, Puritans found

Grammar (London: Tho. Cockerill, 1691) and comprising mostly of letter writing exercises. For further discussion on English grammar schools and universities, see M.L. Clarke, *Classical Education in Britain 1500–1900* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959).

²⁰Rexine, "The Boston Latin School Curriculum," and Holmes, *A Tercentenary History of Boston Latin School* offer official accounts of the grammar school's curriculum but with little commentary about the actual practice of the curriculum.

²¹March 12, 1711, quoted in Kenneth Murdock, "The Teaching of Latin and Greek at the Boston Latin School in 1712," *Pub. Col. Soc. Mass.* 27 (1927): 22.

that humane learning, too, threatened man's obedience to God within the terms of the covenant."²² In his new home of Massachusetts, Englishman and Harvard president Charles Chauncy felt the apparent need in the publication of his 1655 Harvard commencement address to respond to contemporary criticism, including the question of "what ground is there in the Scriptures, for Schools of Learning?"²³ Two decades after the College's founding, a Harvard president could not take it for granted that New England men widely agreed that there *should* be institutions of learning. In this specific case, however, of the disgruntled parents, the apparent anger stemmed as much from unease at the prospect of humane education itself as from an unenthusiastic look at the actual performance of said education. The board of selectmen suggested "Inspectors of the Schools" who would inquire whether there might be "more easie and delightfull methodes" of learning rather than the "former more Tedious and burthensome method."²⁴

This parental concern over a child's education expressed specifically at the turn of the eighteenth century also extended beyond just the grammar school and into Harvard College. Just a few years before the 1711 selectmen meeting, Cotton Mather penned a number of "important points, relating to the Education at Harvard-colledge. Needful be enquired into," one of those being "whether the speaking of Latin [has] not been so discountenanced, as to render our Schollars very unfit for a Conversation with Strangers."²⁵ It is unclear how widely, if at all, Mather's manuscript list of grievances circulated. But judging by a 1712 boastful public pact by Harvard students "for one and all . . . for those who will see, who will read, or who will hear," to speak Latin "with every type of elegance and flourish," the specter of suspicion may have spread to the college, where corrective—and

²²John Morgan, *Godly Learning: Puritan Attitudes towards Reason, Learning, and Education, 1560–1640* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 61.

²³Charles Chauncy, *God's Mercy, Shewed to His People in Giving Them a Faithful Ministry and Schooles of Learning for the Continual Supplyes thereof* (Cambridge, MA: Samuel Greene, 1655), 33.

²⁴Murdock "Latin and Greek at Boston Latin School," 22.

²⁵Cotton Mather, "Some Important Points Relation to the Education at Harvard-College; Needful to be Enquired into, Prepared and Humbly Offered by Some who have Newly Pass'd Thro' the First Four Years of Their Being There" in Kenneth Minkema, "Reforming Harvard: Cotton Mather on Education at Cambridge," *New England Quarterly* 87 (2014): 322.

public facing—measures were implemented.²⁶ Within this cultural context of criticism came Nathaniel Williams's outline of his grammar school's educational schema. While the precise credibility of that account may remain unknown, Melyen's notebook helps pierce through the fog of historical speculation and provide a sober image of the curriculum.

At the back of the notebook, Melyen lists his collection of books in meticulous, numbered fashion. Among his Latin books, he notes two dictionaries,²⁷ multiple unidentified editions of Erasmus in Latin and English, a work of Corderius, two copies of Ovid's *Tristia*, Cato's *Sententiae* "with English and Latin mixed together," Aesop's *Fables*, an unidentified edition of Terence, a Latin Grammar, and two Latin nomenclatures. While ten of the fifteen classical authors mentioned in Williams's letter are missing from Melyen's list, the only authors on Mather's list that Melyen did not mention are Cicero and Virgil. Nonetheless, in other parts of his schoolbook, Melyen records "Phrases collected out of Tullie's epistles in English and Latin," suggesting some level of engagement with the Roman orator. This similarity between Mather's portrayal and Melyen's practice hints at a simpler curriculum than the one Williams described. Further evidence for the Melyen/Mather curriculum can be found in extant Boston seventeenth-century book market receipts, which indicate the importation of dozens of copies of school works of Aesop, Terence, Ovid, Erasmus, and Corderius.²⁸ The memoir of minister William Adams who attended Yale (c. 1720) details similar classical authors: Cicero's "Offices and Orations," Virgil in English and Latin, Horace, Ovid's *Tristia*, Corderius's *Colloquies*, and Terence.²⁹ The

²⁶Declaration signed by students to not speak in the vernacular for one year, 1712 August 23. HUD 712. 90, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, MA.

²⁷Melyen writes a dictionary "by Francis Gouldman" and another by "Mr. Cole." He is likely referring to Francis Gouldman's *A Copious Latin Dictionary in Three Parts* (London: Printed for John Field, 1664). "Mr. Cole" could be Elisha Coles who criticized Gouldman's dictionary and later published his own works. See Elisha Coles, *A Dictionary, English-Latin and Latin-English: Containing All Things Necessary for the Translating of Either Language into the Other* (London: Printed by John Richardson for Peter Parker, 1677).

²⁸Thomas Goodard Wright *Literary Culture in Early New England: 1620–1730* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1920), 224–36. Wright identifies the imported Latin grammars, Terence plays, Erasmus *Colloquies*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Tristia*, Cato's works, *Sententiae Pueriles*, Tully's *Offices*, and others.

²⁹Miss F.M. Caulkins, *Memoir of the Rev. William Adams of Dedham, Mass. and of the Rev. Eliphalet Adams of New London, Conn.* (Cambridge, MA: Metcalf and

Mather/Melyen curriculum thus might have been present in some similar form throughout wider seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century New England.

It is important to keep in mind that an author listed on a flyleaf does not necessarily signify an author read. How a book was used may vary with the student or a schoolmaster's curricular objective. Melyen's notebook offers a rare glimpse into how students interacted, adapted, and assimilated classical texts. Nearly twenty-five pages of Melyen's notes are, as he labeled them in Latin, "phrases and formulas for speaking in English [and] Latin selected from Terence."³⁰ The playwright's comedies were a staple for school children dating back to the Roman Empire.³¹ In the early modern period, as Ian Greene writes, "Terence was highly prized for his polished verse and also seen as a source for moral instruction in the way in which prudence and humanity tended to moderate the extremes of behavior in the plots."³² Richard Bernard, a seventeenth-century English Puritan who first translated Terence's six works into English, believed comedic plays offered profound insights. "I offer you here, that which Fortune has vouchsafed to favour mee withall, a Latine Author taught to Speake English," Bernard wrote in the prefatory letter to his 1629 edition. Terence did not merely provide a storehouse of choice Latin phrases; he taught children how to act, how to live. Farcical tales and characters surely provided their fair share of mirth, but Bernard argues that as the chuckles subsided, something poignant remained: "In telling the truth by these figments; men might become wise to avoide such vices: and learn to practice virtue: which was *Terence's* purpose in setting of these comedies forth in *Latine*, mine in translating them into English."³³

Melyen is nowhere as explicit as Bernard in his reasons for culling selections from Terence, but a careful analysis of the phrases chosen

Company, 1849), 43–44. William Adams lists a dictionary, which he details as "Elisha Coles"—possibly the same edition as Melyen's.

³⁰Melyen, *Commonplace book. phrases et formula[e] loquendi anglico latine ex Terentio selecta[e]*. The translation is mine.

³¹Andrew Cain, "Terence in Late Antiquity," in *A Companion to Terence*, ed. Antony Augoustakis and Ariana Traill (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2013), 382.

³²Ian Greene, *Humanism and Protestantism in Early Modern English Education* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 206.

³³Richard Bernard, *Terence in English: Fabulae Comici Facetissimi Et Elegantissimi Poetae Terentii Omnes Anglicae factae . . . hac nova forma editae*, 5th ed. (London: John Legatt, 1629), A2. Bernard's work was also one of the first ever to offer up an English translation side by side the Roman tongue.

shows the schoolmaster's moral objectives for the schoolchild. The focus was less on Terentian plots and more on expressions that reinforced the authority of the schoolmaster as well as religious instruction. The phrases also provided mundane, everyday expressions that were useful in a subsequent collegiate environment that mandated spoken Latin.³⁴

Classics and The Notebook

In straight blotchy ink lines, Melyen divides his Terentian phrases into two columns, English on the left and Latin on the right (see fig. 1). His goal is to have both languages occupy similar amounts of space, enabling the reader to glance from left to right and make readily apparent the English rendition to its classical counterpart. On the structural level, Melyen accomplishes the task with varying degrees of success. As Latin often does not translate into English concisely, he faces a persistent problem: his columns, like time for Hamlet, run the constant risk of falling out of joint. Dotted lines therefore serve as the bandage, selectively applied to gaping negative spaces on different parts of the manuscript so as to even out and fill the columns.³⁵ Despite all his efforts, Melyen found himself on occasion forced to scribble out and rewrite a phrase in an act of rebalancing the page like a scale.

To the naked eye, these phrases appear sporadic, governed by no evident rhyme or reason:

He minds his book	<i>animam ad studendum apelles</i>
That is the onely business you have to mind	<i>tibi negotii solum datur</i>
They find fault with me for that	<i>id mihi vitio dant</i>
Be favourable minded	<i>ad esto aequo animo, animum advertio</i>
There is no hope	<i>nihil spei est relinquum</i>
I must write the phrases over again	<i>scribente sunt de integro phrases</i>

³⁴*The Lawes and Orders of Harvard Colledge*, 1655–1708, UAI 15.800, Box 1, fol. 1, 1, Harvard University Archives, Cambridge, MA. According to the 1655 policy, “a scholler shall not use the English Tongue in the College with other schollers, unless he be called there unto in publick exercises of oratory or the like.”

³⁵Melyen employs the standard, space-saving macron above vowels to indicate a missing *m* or *n*. In some instances, he employs the macron to squeeze a phrase into one line. Nonetheless, his usage occasionally appears unnecessary, even futile. The manuscript often takes more words to render a Latin phrase into English; abbreviating the Latin only added to the imbalance in columns! A Latin phrase may fit on a single line, but when the English takes up two, Melyen is forced to append dotted lines to the Latin column.

FIG. 1.—Samuel Melyen, *Commonplace Book*, Image provided courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

Take these things away
Come hither I would speake a word or two
with you

I know what you would say
I do not repent of what I have done

*vos istaec auferte
ades dum paucis te volo*

*dictum puta
haud muto factum.*³⁶

³⁶Melyen, *Commonplace-book*, [1]. The pagination employed does not refer to the entire notebook but to the twenty-five pages of Terentian phrases that Melyen numbered. I have expanded certain clear abbreviations as with macrons discussed above. Otherwise, Melyen's orthography and errors are kept as written. I replicate the translations found in his notebook. Any glaring oddities or infelicities between the English

A closer examination of how these phrases fit into the classical texts from which they are drawn, especially the works of Terence, unveils the key to understanding this notebook. Consider the opening lines of Terence's *Andria* (emphasis added in bold):

Poeta quom primum **animum ad scribendum adpult**,
 id **sibi negoti credidit solum dari**,
 populo ut placerent quas fecisset fabulas.
 verum aliter evenire multo intellegit;
 nam in prologis scribundis operam abutitur, 5
 non qui argumentum narret sed qui malevoli
 veteris poetae maledictis respondeat.
 nunc **quam rem vitio dent** quaeso **animum adtendite**.

...

favete, **adeste aequo animo** et rem cognoscite,
 ut pernoscatis **ecquid spei sit relicuom**, 25
 posthac quas **faciet de integro comoedias**,
 spectandae an exigendae sint vobis prius.
 SI. **Vos istaec intro auferte**: abite. - Sosia,
ades dum: paucis te volo. SO. **dictum puta**:
 nempe ut curentur recte haec? SI. immo aliud. SO. quid est 30
 quod tibi mea ars efficere hoc possit amplius?

...

SO. in memoria habeo. SI. **haud muto factum**.³⁷ 40

Melyen follows the sequence of the *Andria* clipping choice phrases that could be stored in his notebook. Such an exercise was common for the time as students were to follow the advice of the Stoic philosopher Seneca and imitate the bees.³⁸ An academic tyro was to buzz through various texts and mine them with his intellectual proboscis for quotations, *flores*, that he could eventually employ in his own compositions. Anthony Grafton notes that the early modern

and Latin, especially when words are supplied in the English that are not present in the Latin, are explained in the footnotes.

³⁷Terence, *Andria*, 1.1–40. Terence, *Comoediae*, ed. R. Kauer & W.M. Lindsay (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1963). Emphasis added in bold. I have omitted the English translation because it is less important here than the observation that Melyen writes these phrases sequentially from Terence's *Andria*. Melyen, *Commonplace-book*.

³⁸Seneca, *Epistulae Morales*, 84.3. See Anthony Grafton, "The Commonplace Bee: A Celebration," in *The Revolt of the Bees Wherein the Future of the Paper-Hive is Declared*, ed. Aaron Levy and Thaddeus Squire (Philadelphia: Slough Foundation, 2005), 34–55 for a discussion of the imagery of the bees in relation to reading and writing among early modern European intellectuals.

European practice of school reading was a practice of extraction: "In most cases, [students] read to reap, and what they reaped, they sorted in the virtual bins known as *Loci communes*."³⁹ Like the reaper, the student could not simply gather everything that lay before him; he needed to discern, to winnow the wheat from the chaff. Melyen chooses and adapts: Terence's "he applied his mind to writing" (*animam ad scribendum adpulit*) becomes Melyen's "he minds his book" (*animam ad studendum apelles*). Likewise, the Roman comedian's, "which he will write anew" (*quas faciet de integro comoedias*) morphs into "phrases should be copied out again" (*scribente sunt de integro phrases*) an almost metatextual commentary on the scholastic process Melyen is undertaking.⁴⁰

While in the first page and the two adaptations mentioned above, Melyen's English phrases stand out as clear, their Latin counterparts are fairly muddled. In the eyes of a scrupulous schoolteacher, then or now, the grammatical oddities are evident. To translate *apelles* as Melyen does is to use a future tense form of a verb for the present, and then, to add insult to injury, to erase the distinction between the second and third person. By way of example, it is tantamount to seeing no difference between "he says" and "you will say." In a similar fashion, the present active participle of *scribere* ("to write") that Melyen construes for his *scribente sunt de integro phrases* makes little grammatical sense. He must have intended *scribendae*, a gerundive indicating a sense of necessity that would have corresponded to the English translation. Depending on how the diphthong "ae" would have been pronounced and considering the phonetic similarity between the dentals "d" and "t," Melyen may have misheard a dictated phrase and copied out *scribente* for *scribendae*. Alternatively, Melyen could have thought, albeit incorrectly, that *scribente* signified a freestanding ablative participle of means, akin to "by writing."⁴¹ All this is not to be critical of Melyen, the schoolboy learning a new language. Despite the morphological and grammatical errors he introduces, Melyen's English translations indicate his desire to adapt Terentian phrases to the present. "He minds his book," and "phrases

³⁹Anthony Grafton, "Textbooks and the Disciplines," in *Scholarly Knowledge: Textbooks in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Emidio Campi et al. (Geneva, CH: Librairie Droz S.A., 2008), 27.

⁴⁰Melyen, *Commonplace-book*, [1].

⁴¹Here, *horresco referens*, the Latin teachers among us shudder at this possible (mis)use of the participle. Giving Melyen the benefit of the doubt, this author prefers the former interpretation. *Commonplace-book*.

should be copied out again" do not rely on larger narrative structures; they do not ask the speaker or listener to supplement much. As phrases in the present and (at least in the English) in the third person or in an impersonal construction, these Terentian adages could be used and reused in scholastic life.

Without the *Andria* the modern reader of the notebook would be unable to understand the larger context of the play and the function of Melyen's exercise. The phrases, no more than six Latin words apiece, relay no plot or summary of the relevant lines to which they correspond. In his prologue to the *Andria*, Terence provides a vigorous defense against unnamed critics who lambast the playwright for adapting Greek comedies into Roman ones.⁴² Terence cites earlier Roman authors who also modified Greek works: Naevius, Plautus, Ennius. For his part, Melyen elides the introductory discussion of authorial intent or literary models. The focus for him is not to follow Terence to master the arguments or characters. In fact, too faithful an observance to the *Andria* or the *Eunuchus*, from which Melyen also copies phrases, would have resulted in transferring the more scandalous side of Roman comedy to a Puritan notebook.

Both the *Andria* and the *Eunuchus* feature readymade plots in which teenage boys with uncontrollable sexual appetites fall in love, impregnate prostitutes, marry, and live happily ever after. Although Terence remained an enduring staple for a rhetorical education, pious Christians before the Puritans sometimes expressed unease at Roman comedies. In the fifth century Augustine lamented that a Latin education taught vain, indecorous Terentian phrases.⁴³ Likewise, tenth-century playwright Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim prefaced her dramatic works as especially necessary, given many supposedly hypocritical Catholics in the Ottonian court who "cling to sacred scriptures, [and] although they scorn other things of the gentiles, nevertheless they read again and again more frequently the fictions of Terence, and while they are cajoled by the sweetness of his sermon, they are defiled by the knowledge of unspeakable affairs."⁴⁴ More ambivalent,

⁴²Terence, *Andria*, 15–16. *Id isti vituperant factum atque in eo disputant / contaminari non decere fabulas* ("they excoriate me for this and argue that it is not proper to defile [these] stories").

⁴³Augustine, *Confessiones*, 1.16.

⁴⁴Hrotsvitha, prefatory letter in *Dulcitius and Paphnutius*, ed. Paul Pascal (Bryn Mawr, PA: Bryn Mawr Commentaries, 1989), 7. *Sunt etiam alii, sacris inhaerentes paginis, qui licet alia gentilium spernant, Terentii tamen figmenta frequentius leccitant et, dum dulcedine sermonis delectantur, nefandarum notitia rerum maculantur.*

Renaissance intellectuals often celebrated humane lessons to be found in Terence's works, but some prominent teachers, such as Juan Luis Vives, thought it would serve schoolboys better if Christian authors replaced Roman playwrights.⁴⁵ For their part, Melyen's phrases occasionally refer to a "maiden" (*virgo*) or "marriage" (*nuptiae*) but focus more often on themes of loss, suffering, and faith. While nowhere does formal religion appear by name, it is hard to miss the potential spiritual purposes behind the Latin expressions selected for the notebook.

Miser aequae atque ego, a playful retort in the *Andria* that Melyen renders "he is in as sad a condition as I" (Cpb [12], *Andria*, 702) takes on greater significance alongside phrases like "forebear to burden me with injuries" (*mitte me ornerare injurias*. Cpb [13]; *Andria*, 827), "you will utterly undo me" (*hodie postremum me vides*. Cpb [7]; *Andria*, 322), "my hope hath failed" (*me spes frustrum*. Cpb [8]; *Andria* 374),⁴⁶ "I am an undone man" (*nullus sum*; Cpb [10]; *Andria*, 370), or "you sad me with vain hope" (*me falsa spe factas*. Cpb [11]; *Andria*, 648). While Terence discussed the seemingly foiled plots of *adulescentes* or the frightening reproaches of *senes*, Melyen's phrases have religious energy. Melyen's Latin expressions reside in a notebook that brims with other religious notes, biblical passages, catechisms, and poetry. Other books listed in the notebook's back-page inventory include a Dutch bible, a "book called the protestant's tutor," "another little book called the Guide to heaven," and "pilgrim's progress."⁴⁷ Melyen specifically copies selections from Michael Wigglesworth's *A Short Discourse on Eternity* and *A Dialogue or Discourse between the*

⁴⁵Carole E. Newlands, "Hrotswitha's Debt to Terence," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 116 (1986): 369–91; Ursula Potter, "'No Terence Phrase: His Tyme and Myne Are Twaine': Erasmus, Terence, and Censorship in the Tudor Classroom" in *The Classics in the Medieval and Renaissance Classrooms: The Role of Ancient Texts in the Arts Curriculum as Revealed by Surviving Manuscripts and Early Printed Books*, ed. Juan Feros Ruys et al. (Turnhout, BE: Brepols, 2013), 369.

⁴⁶Melyen seems to have erred in copying down the Terentian phrase *me spes haec frustrata est*. It is unclear what he could have meant by *frustrum*.

⁴⁷"The protestant's tutor" likely refers to a prominent seventeenth-century English primer, *The Protestant tutor: instructing children to spel and read English, and ground them in the true Protestant religion and discovering the errors and decits of the Papists* (London: Ben. Harris, 1679). See David Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989) 21–70 for a discussion of the practice and prevalence of English literacy in colonial New England.

Believing Soul and her Saviour, both of which focus on the transitory nature of the mundane world juxtaposed with the timeless, fulfilling spirit of God.⁴⁸ Thus given the context of Melyen's other selections, the Terentian phrases such as "my mind is weaving [*sic*]" (*in dubio est animus*; Cpb [6], *Andria*, 266), "I love him dearly" (*egregie charum te habeo*; Cpb [6], *Andria*, 273), and "it is in your power onely" (*in te solo situm est*; Cpb [6], *Andria*, 276) suggest the joining of language instruction with the practice of piety.

The Notebook's Sources

Given that at the turn of the sixteenth century and into the seventeenth century, multiple English editions of Terence were published for the first time, it would be naïve to suppose *prima facie* that Melyen was the sole creator of his transcriptions.⁴⁹ A printed source that Melyen could have drawn from would be Bernard's edition of Terence (1629). In his review of early modern translations, John Barsby notes three other popular early modern English editions of the Roman comedian: Nicholas Udall's *Flowers for Latin Speaking* (1533), Charles Hoole's *Six Comedies of the Excellent Poet Publius Terentius an African of Carthage in English and Latine* (1667), and Joseph Webbe's editions of the *Andria* and *Eunuchus* (1629).⁵⁰ Another contender could be T.G. Gentleman's *Clavis Terentiana in Usus Juventutis Studiosae: Or, a Collection of Phrases Out of the Six Comedies; with Some Observations* (1670). Melyen does not provide any explicit clues to his source text, as he pens in an inventory of books simply "another terrance."

An examination of the printed works in comparison to Melyen's notebook raises more questions than answers. To start, Bernard

⁴⁸Melyen's notes from Wiggelsworth and Bunyan do not appear extraneous or rushed entries but part of the curriculum. At the end of each poetic selection transcribed, Melyen writes *finis anno domini 1689* (the end, in the year 1689), indicating some type of formal, ritualized transcription process that mirrors early modern practices of notetaking, particularly at Harvard College.

⁴⁹Martine Van Elk, "Thou shalt present me as eunuch to him": Terence in Early Modern England," in *A Companion to Terence*, ed. Antony Augoustakis and Ariana Traill (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2013), 411.

⁵⁰John Barsby, "Terence in Translation," in *A Companion to Terence*, 446–49. For a brief biography and bibliography of Hoole and Webbe, see Foster Watson, "Charles Hoole, A Schoolmaster of the Commonwealth: His New Educational Standpoint," *School Review* 9, (1901): 433–39; and Foster Watson, "Dr. Joseph Webbe and Language Teaching (1622)," *Modern Language Notes* 26 (1911): 40–46.

appears to have drawn heavily from Udall's *Flowers for Latin Speaking* for his own "formulas for speaking" (*formulae loquendi*). Thus, even if many of Melyen's translations appear to be derived from Bernard, they also could have come from Udall. Certain phrases of Melyen's do not appear in Udall's or Webbe's work, indicating he or his teacher had access to a more complete edition of Terence. While the *Clavis Terentiana* includes phrases from all six comedies organized in columns similar to those that appear in the notebook, the translations do not always match Melyen's. The translated phrases align most often with the English provided by the renowned schoolmaster Charles Hoole. Still, no single printed work provides an exhaustive source for Melyen's notebook. Reading between the lines or the columns, so to speak, of Melyen's text hints at some direction from a Boston schoolmaster.

Early in the *Andria*, a clever slave urges his master's son to forego a (supposed) prostitute in favor of the arranged marriage his father desires: "There is no place for laziness or inaction, as much as I understood recently the opinion of (your father) about the marriage; if this is not handled cleverly, it will destroy me or the master."⁵¹ Adapting these lines, Melyen scrawls in his notebook: "It is not time to be slothful and sluggish, idleness will undoe you" (*nihil loci est signitiae nec socordia otium te posun dabit*; Cpb [5]).⁵² Melyen's insertion of *otium* into the Latin is telling. This was no classical *otium* of Cicero, a refined cultivation of the mind and preparation for work, *negotium*. Rather, the Terentian phrase becomes a stern warning for the Puritan student. "Idleness," one of the most pronounced fears of the Puritans had profound spiritual consequences. Perry Miller comments that spiritual sluggishness, "deadness of heart was the most insupportable curse the Puritan was called upon to bear . . . [Puritan] sermons denounce enemies and libertines and hypocrites, but they scale the heights of vituperation and scorn when they descant upon the 'glozing neuters of the world.'"⁵³ In one's first instruction in the English

⁵¹Terence, *Andria*, 206–9. *nihil loci est segnitiae neque socordiae, quantum intellexi modo senis sententiam de nuptiis. quae si non astu providentur, me aut erum pessum dabunt.*

⁵²With *posun dabit*, Melyen clearly intended a form of the Latin idiom *pessum dare*, meaning to destroy or ruin.

⁵³Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 58.

language, *The New England Primer*, a student even learned “The idle Fool / is whipt at school.”⁵⁴

The cautionary note carries the distinct flavor of a schoolmaster instructing schoolchildren. Directly following these foreboding phrases is yet another cautionary aphorism: “it is a hard thing to beguile any master” (*praeptori verba dare difficile est*; Cpb [5]; *Andria* 946). The respective lines in the *Andria* make no mention of a *praeceptor*, a teacher or instructor; Terence refers to an old man, a *senex*. Melyen, however, occasionally adapts and inserts the presence of the teacher figure on other occasions. Terence identifies the alleged prostitute, writing “from her I’ve heard it a thousand times” (*ex ipsa miliens audivi*).⁵⁵ While forgetting to add *audivi*, Melyen instead writes “I have heard of my master 1000 times” (*ex praeceptore millies*; Cpb [16]). In this particular case, one wonders who originated the phrase. In other words, did the schoolmaster instruct Melyen to modify the Terentian line to highlight how often schoolchildren need reminders, or was Melyen showing his own comedic handiwork and commenting on the possibly repetitive style of the instructor? Likewise, when Melyen modifies a phrase from the prologue of the *Eunuchus* about Terence giving his own work over for inspection, he writes another expression that could be used in various contexts: “[let] me look into your book” (*sit mihi inspiciendi copia*; Cpb [16], *Eunuchus*, 21). Foremost, the request is redolent of a schoolmaster’s, maybe as he inspected note-taking practices or other sundry homework assignments. But Melyen himself could also employ the line when asking to take a peek into a classmate’s notebook or to borrow a text. Printed works, after all, were rare and prized possessions in colonial America. Individual readers, including students, went to lengths to clearly mark out their claims to ownership through nameplates and inscriptions. Harvard president Charles Chauncy scrawled the warning “Steal this Booke if you dare” into some of his books.⁵⁶ Some works carried even more forbidding messages written in Latin rhyme: “This book is mine / God is my witness / If someone should steal it, / let him be hanged by his

⁵⁴Paul Leicester Ford, ed., *The New-England Primer: A History of its Origin and Development with a Reprint of the Unique Copy of the Earliest Known Edition* (New York: Teacher’s College, Columbia University, 1962), [9].

⁵⁵Terence, *Andria*, 946.

⁵⁶Arthur O. Norton, *Harvard Text-Books and Reference Books of the Seventeenth Century in Pub. Col. Soc. Mass.* 28 (Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1935): 377.

neck.”⁵⁷ Maybe in taking down the Terentian phrase, Melyen knew that it was better to ask before borrowing books from any bibliotaph.

In other instances the Latin and English expressions appear more one-dimensional, more centered on the schoolmaster. Indeed Melyen writes phrases that could have been uttered in a schoolhouse: “do as I bid you” (*fac ita ut iussi*; Cpb [6]), “away with plaies” (*valeat ludis*; Cpb [12]), “not a word” (*verbum si addideris*; Cpb [14]), “do you interrupt me” (*Itane obturbas*; Cpb [15]), “are you sorry for what you have done” (*num facti piget*; Cpb [15]). In some places, Melyen even refers to a grammar school and its specific location—Boston. Adapting a Terentian comment directed towards Thais, a prostitute that young men view as their financial ruin (*nostrī fundi calamitas*; *Eunuchus*, 79), Melyen writes: “this is the undoing of our school” (*hoc est nostrae scholae calamitas*; Cpb [17]). He also repurposes a quip from the *Andria*, “what are you doing who rarely come to Athens” (*quid tu Athenas insolens*; *Andria*, 907) into “what do you at Boston who are here seldom” (*quid tu Bostoni vin insolens*; Cpb [15]). In other words, the process of notetaking from Terentian plays often entails a shift of focus onto the school, the schoolmaster, or the scholastic process itself, although the precise balance between teacher and student influence in the manuscript remains unclear. In early modern English grammar schools, students often wrote down phrases in their notebooks as the schoolmaster dictated passages from classical authors.⁵⁸ Some part of Melyen’s grammar school instruction could have been oral with the teacher and/or student adapting phrases to the particular moment. Repeated phrases, like “with tooth & naile” (*manibus pedibusque*; Cpb [4;11]), in Melyen’s manuscript strongly hint at an *ad hoc* nature of at least some of the reading occurring in a schoolhouse. If a student were simply to copy from an already curated manuscript or printed textbook, it is likely that repetition would have been avoided.

⁵⁷Norton, *Harvard Text-Books*, 377. *Hic liber est meus / Testis est Deus / Si quis furatur / Per collum pendatur*. See also Morison *Harvard College in the Seventeenth Century* 1:151–57 for a discussion of student textbooks, including transcribed examples and pictures of nameplates and Latin inscriptions.

⁵⁸Emily Lynn Hansen, “From ‘Humanist’ to ‘Godly’?: The Changing Social Function of Education in Early Modern English Grammar Schools” (PhD diss., University of York, 2015) 47. For further discussion of student notetaking, see Ann Blair “Student Manuscripts and the Textbook,” in *Scholarly Knowledge: Textbooks in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Emidio Campi et al (Genève, CH: Librairie Droz, 2008): 39–75.

Although the Latin phrases copied out more often than not conform to classical standards of spelling, Melyen's mistakes appear when he adapts the text. This very well could be an example of a school boy struggling to write down exactly his teacher dictated. If the expression were the same as that in an edition of Terence close at hand, the potential for misspelling poses less of a problem. If, however, the phrase contained wholesale additions, eccentricities in orthography would easily creep into the manuscript. There are indeed discernible instances of minor misspellings that one might make if writing from dictation rather than a printed work: *signitiae* vs. *segnitiae*, *scis* vs. *sis*, *redias* vs. *redeas*, *avidior* vs. *avidior*, *pistrinum* vs. *pistrinium*. Admittedly, it is speculative to reconstruct how a New England student's ears were tuned to oral Latin and what might have caused confusion. To complicate the matter further, there is at least one error that hints at copying from a written text rather than dictation. In writing out the Latin corresponding to his English phrase "you have no mind for your books," Melyen writes *fudia frigent* (Cpb [20]). Judging by his earlier translations where he refers to books or study, he likely meant *studia* for *fudia*. This odd mistake occurs in the adaptation from the Terentian line: "not surprisingly people here are cold at heart" (*nimirum hic homines frigent*; *Eunuchus*, 268). In erasing the mention of humans and adding the invocation of books, Melyen somehow confused an "s" for an "f." Conceivably, the confusion here might stem from hastily mistaking the long, descending "s" (ʃ) of *studia* with the adjacent "f" of *frigent* than in misinterpreting the two syllables read aloud. All this is to say that Melyen probably employed both transcription and dictation methods in writing out his phrases with each approach introducing its own particular type of possible missteps.

Composition in Practice

Beyond understanding the source and process behind Melyen's recording of Terentian phrases, one must consider the historical significance of the notebook, to inquire, as a Roman comedic character might: *Quid igitur* ("What then")? Even if students read, adapted, and stored phrases from classical works, is one to assume Melyen represents the command of Latin that Nathaniel Williams detailed in his 1712 letter? Melyen's notebook does not provide clear answers to this inquiry but does offer clues. While the Terentian phrases, whether religious, scolding, or often just plain mundane, suggest some desire

FIG. 2.—Melyen, *Commonplace Book*, Cicero Phrases.

to advance the spoken use of the Roman tongue, other entries of Melyen's indicate a similar intent for the written command of Latin.

In the latter half of his notebook, Melyen copies one page of "phrases collected out of Tullie's Epistles—in English and Latine" (fig. 2). At first glance, the entries again appear to be random. All, to be sure, derive from Cicero's letters, but the connection between "endeavour that you may recover" (*da operam ut convalasces*) and "Liberrall letters are brought to me at last from Cesar" (*reditae mihi iam tandem sunt a caesare litterae liberales satis*) seems lacking. Though the sample size for the Ciceronian phrases compared to the Terentian ones is much smaller, there is a noticeable lack of any spelling or grammatical errors, hinting at the availability of a polished written text from which Melyen copied. In fact, an analysis of early modern

FIG. 3.—Charles Hoole, *Centuria Epistolarum Anglo-Latinarum* (London 1660), A1-A2.

textbooks allows us to identify the source from which he likely borrowed the text: Charles Hoole's *A Century of Epistles, English and Latin* (fig. 3).⁵⁹ Initially, Melyen writes out the first phrase with a vertical orientation: English on top, Latin below. Following the first expression, however, Melyen reverts back to the two-column method of the Terentian notes, and the one that Hoole himself employed: English on the left, Latin on the right. Following the English schoolmaster, the first quotations Melyen writes down come from Book Fourteen of Cicero's *Epistulae ad Familiares*, specifically those letters to Tullia, the Roman orator's daughter. Melyen's notes, despite slight variations in translation and omission of many phrases, mimic the order laid out by Hoole.

In addition to the one page of phrases collected from Cicero, Melyen's notebook also contains three pages of "rules for placing words in making Latin." These formulaic instructions, such as where a preposition belongs in a sentence or that *quidem* can never begin a

⁵⁹Charles Hoole, *Centuria Epistolarum Anglo-Latinarum: Ex tritissimis Classicis Authoribus, viz. Cicerone, Plinio, & Textore, selectarum*. (London: Printed by W. Wilson for the Company of Stationers, 1660).

sentence, both likely from an unidentified grammar textbook, would not have proved helpful in reading Latin. As the titular note suggests, the focus was on “making Latin,” a further indication of compositional training at the grammar school. The practice of making a “theme” that Cotton Mather flaunted in his autobiography would have been an early rhetorical exercise for Melyen. This training, as Ian Greene explains, was firmly rooted in the early modern English educational system. “Students would be given a title, usually an *exordium* commending or disparaging a person or thing, and have a week to develop their case, using a carefully stipulated framework but filling it in with suitable arguments and materials of their own.” Often, the theme would come directly from Cicero’s *De Officiis*, a miscellany of practical and ethical philosophy that enjoyed tremendous reception in early modern Europe.⁶⁰

Melyen’s notes from Cicero’s letters are noticeably different from moral maxims; he was not mining Hoole’s curated creation of Ciceroian phrases for philosophical display but rather for the very act of letter writing. Just as Mather boasted of making “epistles” in Latin when a student, so in fact was also letter writing, a common practice in early modern European grammar schools.⁶¹ Unfortunately, Melyen’s notebook contains no direct indications of attempted or completed epistles. Beyond the classical and religious texts already mentioned in Melyen’s inventory of books, he also owned “a book to write at meeting,” and “another writing book.” The former likely refers to the common New England practice, especially among students, of taking sermon notes at the meetinghouse.⁶² But with the latter, one wonders what ever amounted to those blank pages, whether they contained any Latin notes or compositions, any more insights into early American education that have been irrevocably lost to time. By momentarily departing from Melyen, and making use of extant historical sources, namely other Latin letters young boys wrote to their fathers, it is possible to see what the epistolary composition process looked like.

Nearly four decades before Melyen, Seaborn Cotton (B.A. 1651) copied out a message written to his father John Cotton in his

⁶⁰Greene, *Humanism and Protestantism in Early Modern English Education*, 201–2.

⁶¹Hansen, “From ‘Humanist’ to Godly,” 59.

⁶²Meredith Neuman, *Jeremiah’s Scribes: Creating Sermon Literature in Puritan New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013).

personal notebook. Though the exact date of the letter is unclear, Seaborn would have been attending either grammar school or Harvard College. In publishing Seaborn's notebook, Samuel Eliot Morison deemed the missive was "certainly not original" arguing that "the mistakes in Latin are of the sort that creep into a text recopied several times."⁶³ Needless to say, many of these so-called "mistakes" arose from Cotton's sloppy penmanship, though more than a few sprung from Morison's eccentric transcriptions.⁶⁴ Regardless of orthographic issues, Morison's hunch about the text being copied out several times appears accurate and in fact demonstrates how Seaborn Cotton, and maybe Melyen, used phrases collected from their textbooks in their own Latin compositions.

Writing to his father, Seaborn Cotton began his letter ornately:

*Quum ab Ingratitudine non secus abhorream quam Achilles ille Homericus a Mendacio, et mecum Perpenderem quam esset Immensum quod tuae debeam Benignitati ut Meritum omne, omne quoque officium exsuperet meum, credidi te Accepturum si tibi Literariâ strenulâ, aut flosculo quopiam e Musarum Hortulis decerpto animum Memorem et Gratum utcunque testarer. Oh utinam tua in Me Perpetuò collata (multò plus meritò) Beneficia unquam solvendo esse queam. Grates persolvere Dignas, Hoc opus, Hic Labor est.*⁶⁵

A reader educated in the classics, as John Cotton was, would have immediately identified the Virgilian quotations taken from books 1 and 6 of the *Aeneid*, especially as that popular combination appeared in a Harvard president's 1675 Latin commencement address and a

⁶³Seaborn Cotton, *The Reverend Seaborn Cotton's Commonplacebook*, ed. Samuel Eliot Morison (Boston: Merrymount Press, 1937), 327.

⁶⁴Seaborn Cotton, *Commonplace book*, Mss A 1454, 87, Stanton Avery Special Collections, New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, MA. Morison occasionally stumbles when interpreting Cotton's marks. Cotton pens *hoc opus, hic labor est*, but Morison transcribes it *his labor est*. Likewise, Morison writes *quam esset Immenso*, for *quam esset Immensum*. Other instances like this appear half a dozen times in Morison's transcription, and sometimes render Cotton's sentences grammatically unintelligible. For that reason, references are to the original manuscript.

⁶⁵Cotton, *Commonplace book*, 87. "Since I shudder from ingratitude not differently than Homer's Achilles shudders from a lie, and when I thought it over with myself how enormous is that which I owe to your good will, that it surpasses my entire merit, and also my entire office, I believed you would approve that I bear witness in one way or another to a mindful and grateful spirit with a little scholarly gift or some small flower plucked from the gardens of the Muses. Oh, would that I were ever to be able to pay back your favors bestowed unto me perpetually, much more than I have deserved. To give back worthy thanks, that is the task, this is the work." Another copy and translation of the letter may be found in Sargent Bush, *The Correspondence of John Cotton* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 473–76. Bush also cleans up many of the errors in Morison's edition.

1697 Latin student salutatory oration.⁶⁶ In this sense, Seaborn makes good on his promise to present a “little flower plucked from the garden of the muses” or a small gift (*strenula*). In more subtle ways, he seems to have lingered in that muse-filled garden all the while collecting his *flosculi* and passing them off as his own. Neither a contemporary nor the modern reader may recognize any other clear textual references in the letter, but Seaborn clearly drew heavily from Erasmus. In a 1514 letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury William Warham, Erasmus wrote, albeit in fuller form, nearly the same first lines as Seaborn.⁶⁷ The discrepancies that do exist between Erasmus and Seaborn can be accounted for by considering an intermediary source that was likely consulted. In the section for “giving thanks” (*gratias agendi*), a popular rhetoric handbook of the time by Lincolnshire grammar schoolmaster John Clarke that was also owned by other New England students, contains an adapted version of the Erasmus passage virtually identical to Cotton’s (similarities appear in bold):

Cum ab Ingratitudine non secus abhorream quam Achilles ille Homericus a Mendacio, mecumque perpenderem quam esset immensum quod tuae debeam benignitati, ut meritum omne, omne quoque officium exsuperet meum; optimum iudicavi ut tibi literariâ strenulâ, aut flosculo quopiam e Musarum Hortulis decerpto animum memorem atque amantem utcunque testarer.⁶⁸

⁶⁶Virgil, *Aeneid*, 1:600 (*Urbe domo socias, grates persolvere dignas . . .*); 6:129 (*hoc opus, hic labor est. pauci, quos aequus amavit . . .*). More or less the same Virgilian lines appear in Urian Oakes’s 1675 Latin commencement address and Harvard student Elisha Cooke’s commencement oration (B.A. 1697). Leo M. Kaiser “The Unpublished ‘Oratio Secunda’ of Urian Oakes, Harvard, 1675,” *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 21 (1972): 403; and “Ferris Festisque Diebus: The Salutatory Oration of Elisah Cooke Jr., 7 July 1696,” *Harvard Library Bulletin* 28 (1980): 387.

⁶⁷Erasmus to William Warham, June 1514, in *Opus Epistolarum Des. Erasmi Roterodami: 1584–1514*, ed. P.S. Allen (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1906), 1:562. (similarities with the Seaborn Cotton letter appear in bold) Cum ab **ingratitude non secus abhorream quam Achilles ille Homericus a mendacio, mecumque perpenderem quam esset immensum quod tuae debeam benignitati**, rursum et illud viderem, mediocribus amicis de mediocribus beneficiis gratias agi convenire, porro tam excellenti vereque Primati gratiam referre conari tantum abesse a grati hominis officio ut potius ingratitude vel certe insolentiae genus esse videatur; videlicet optimum factu iudicavi, **ut meritum omne, omne quoque officium exsuperet meum**; optimum iudicavi **ut tibi literariâ strenulâ, aut flosculo quopiam e Musarum Hortulis decerpto animum memorem atque amantem ut-**cunque testarer.

⁶⁸John Clarke, *Formulae oratoriae: in usum scholarum concinnatae* (London: Rob: Milbourn 1637), 314. Cotton Mather owned a copy of the textbook which is now

Without mentioning Erasmus or the Latin textbook directly, Cotton demonstrates turning Latin education toward tangibly pious and practical ends. In this case he expressed to his father the deep regret for spiritual acedia, for not always following paternal advice. Like Melyen, Cotton blends classical and religious references in his composition, quoting from the bible when he prays that God “may give me a new heart, and turn my stone heart into one of flesh” (*cor novum mihi det, et lapidem in Carneum Mutat*).⁶⁹ A young student could have memorized brief biblical or Virgilian quotes, but the longer Erasmian expressions for giving thanks indicate a more formal process of notetaking, consulting rhetoric handbooks, collecting the appropriate *flosculi*, and then stringing them together in a literary garland.

Beyond letter writing, grammar school boys would have used similar reading and writing skills in verse composition. In contrast to schoolmaster Nathaniel Williams’s bragging about students who readily composed poetry, Melyen’s notebook contains no Latin verse. This is not to say that he, or other students, would have been inept at channeling Calliope; some, in fact, did write Latin poetry.⁷⁰ But Melyen’s text, focused more on prose than verse composition, calls for a more temperate assessment of Latin composition skills at Boston grammar schools than some historians have recently advanced. Through a careful examination of a verse rendition of an Aesop fable by Benjamin Larnell, a seventeenth-century Native American school boy, most likely composed at the Boston Latin School, Thomas Keeline and Stuart McManus conclude cautiously, but nonetheless optimistically, that the poem reveals “a competent, if yet underdeveloped poetic genius at work.”⁷¹ For all their intricate structural and stylistic

preserved at the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA. For more on Clarke, see Green, *Humanism and Protestantism in Early Modern Education*, 100–03.

⁶⁹Cotton, *Commonplace book*, 88. Cotton clearly adapts his text from Ezekiel: 36:26 (*et dabo vobis cor novum et spiritum novum ponam in medio vestri et auferam cor lapideum de carne vestra et dabo vobis cor carneum*).

⁷⁰Leo M. Kaiser, *Early American Latin Verse 1625–1685: An Anthology* (Chicago: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 1984) contains about a dozen Latin poems written by former Harvard and grammar school students. Most of these compositions are elegies occasioned upon the deaths of prominent New England men. At the time of writing, most authors were middle-aged ministers who presumably would have retained some competency in verse composition from their school days.

⁷¹Thomas Keeline and Stuart McManus, “Benjamin Larnell, the Last Latin Poet at Harvard Indian College,” *Harvard Studies in Classics Philology* 108 (2016): 622.

analysis of the poem, Keeline and McManus do not mention its specific historical context. In fact, the poem dates to around the same time as Williams's letter in that very same context of educational criticism discussed earlier. In his missive, Williams even mentions that he attaches examples of student work including a verse translation of an Aesop fable.⁷² Moreover, the handwriting of the student's composition and Williams's letter appear identical, casting doubt on the very premise that it was the student who "dipped his quill in the inkwell and wrote out this copy."⁷³

This is not to discount Larnell's poetic potential or to strip his name from the byline of this Latin piece. References to Aesop's fables also appeared in seventeenth-century Latin declamations at Harvard, lending credence to the idea that students did not just read these stories passively but adapted and incorporated them into their own writings as well.⁷⁴ Still, the Larnell poem does not exist in a vacuum. If anything, considering the student's verse composition within its specific historical milieu further reveals the ways Native Americans, particularly through their Latin writings, helped garner funds for and assuage concerns about the New World's early educational institutions.⁷⁵ That said, given that the Latin parable was meant to impress, it would not be too farfetched to suppose an editorial hand by Williams. Thus, Latin verse composition can perhaps be regarded as a goal for students to which a schoolmaster might aspire in a time of anxiety over a grammar school curriculum. Either lacking ability

⁷²Williams to Hobart 1712, quoted in Rexine, "The Boston Latin School Curriculum," 264.

⁷³Keeline and McManus, "Benjamin Larnell," 636.

⁷⁴Joseph Belcher, *The laws of Harvard Colledge*: manuscript, 1686, MS Am 1997, seq. 73. Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. An edition of all Belcher's declamations can be found in the appendix to Theodore Delwiche, "*in silvis Academia surgit*: Latin Learning in Seventeenth-Century New England" (BA thesis, Harvard College, 2018): 128–52.

⁷⁵Caleb Cheesateaumauk's 1663 letter to Robert Boyle is the most famous example of a Native American writing in Latin. As a student, Cheesateaumauk expressed profuse thanks to donors and solicited further gifts for the education of Native Americans at the Harvard Indian College. For a transcription, translation, and discussion of the text, see Beatrix Dudenshing-Reichel and Wolfgang Hochbruck "'Honoratissimi benefactores,' Native American students and two Seventeenth-century texts in the University Tradition" in *Early Native American Writing: New Critical Essays*, ed. Helen Jaskoski (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 1–15. For the most recent interpretation of the text and an exploration of the Harvard Indian College, see Lisa Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip's War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), 72–107.

or ambition, many students were likely able to skirt nominal verse composition requirements.⁷⁶

Conclusion

Even if Melyen's notebook contains no original poetry or letters, it still sheds light on New England schools. The culling of classical and religious texts reveals the transfer of an intellectual heritage from England to New England and a blending of piety with classical study. A schoolmaster could find and reinforce moral lessons even from Roman comedies about prostitutes and slaves. Meanwhile, a schoolboy could practice notetaking through the transcription of Latin formulae and phrases. By laying out Terentian adages or Ciceronian expressions in neat columns, Melyen could have kept his notebook for continued use; all the more easily, he could have constructed and created future compositions. The transcriptions and translations were not always perfect, but they were the start of an education that would last many years.

New England intellectuals continued to rely on Terence after their schooldays. Cotton Mather remembered Harvard president Charles Chauncy for "how Fluently he expressed himself . . . with Latin of a Terentian Phrase."⁷⁷ A later president, Urian Oakes, frequently filled his commencement addresses with quotations from the Roman playwright.⁷⁸ And so Leonard Hoar, another Harvard president, albeit briefly, urged his nephew at the College to speak Latin "in the purest phrase of Terence and Erasmus."⁷⁹ An organized notebook would have served tangible uses for a young boy graduated from a grammar school and moved on to a college environment demanding Latin

⁷⁶Evidence that Boston Latin School students could avoid requirements for verse composition can be found in John Barnard (1681–1770), *Autobiography* in *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (Boston: Eastburn, 1836), 25:177–244. Barnard writes: "Master put our class upon turning Aesop's Fables into Latin verse. Some dull fellows made a shift to perform this to acceptance; but I was so much duller at this exercise, that I could make nothing of it . . . and therefore plainly told my master, that I had diligently labored all I could to perform what he required, and perceiving I had no genius for it, I thought it was in vain to strive against nature any longer; and he never more required it of me" (180).

⁷⁷Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, 4:136.

⁷⁸Kaiser, "The Unpublished 'Oratio Secunda' of Urian Oakes, Harvard," 387–412. Kaiser identified many, but not all clear quotations from Terence.

⁷⁹Leonard Hoar to Josiah Flynt, March 27, 1661, in *The Puritans: A Sourcebook of Their Writings*, ed. Thomas H. Johnson and Perry Miller (New York: Harper Touchbooks, 1963), 2:712.

knowledge and compositional skill. And even if one graduated last in his college class, as Melyen did, the goal might not have been to become a *bona fide* Latin scholar. The practices of reading, notetaking, and drawing religious messages from even unlikely places could have served Melyen well when he became a minister as half of Harvard students in the seventeenth century did.

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