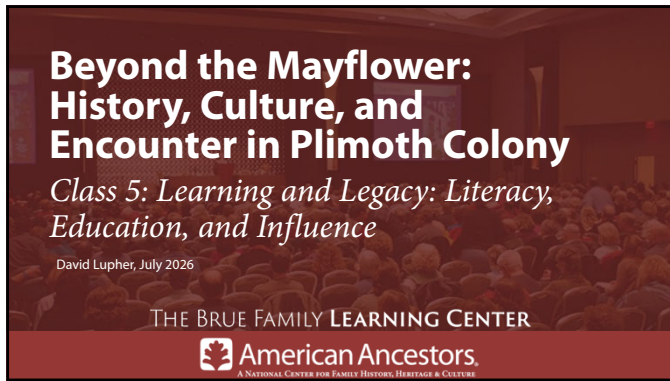




**Beyond the Mayflower:
History, Culture, and
Encounter in Plimoth Colony**

*Class 5: Learning and Legacy: Literacy,
Education, and Influence*

David Lupher, July 2026

THE BRUE FAMILY LEARNING CENTER

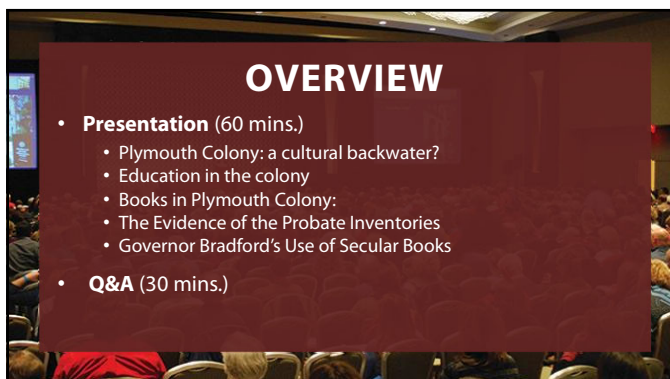
 **American Ancestors.**
A NATIONAL CENTER FOR FAMILY HISTORY, HERITAGE & CULTURE



Meet today's presenter



David Lupher
University of Puget Sound



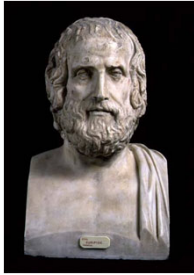
OVERVIEW

- **Presentation** (60 mins.)
 - Plymouth Colony: a cultural backwater?
 - Education in the colony
 - Books in Plymouth Colony:
 - The Evidence of the Probate Inventories
 - Governor Bradford's Use of Secular Books
- **Q&A** (30 mins.)

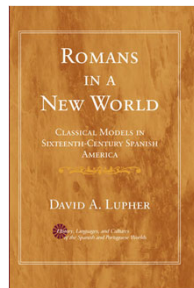
Part 1

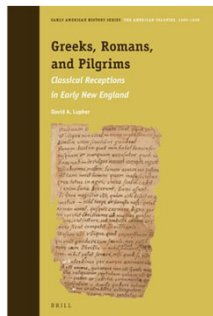
Plymouth Colony: A Cultural Backwater?

Education in the Colony



Euripides

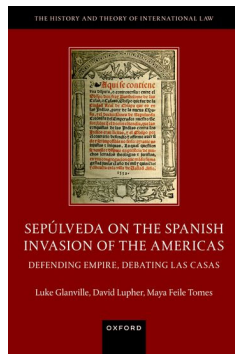




Dialogues, Poetry, Correspondence and Other Writings by William Bradford

INTRODUCED AND EDITED BY
FRANCIS J. BREMER
DAVID A. LUPHER
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"The First Thanksgiving at Plymouth" (1914)
Jennie Augusta Brownscombe (1850-1936)
Leiden, Museum De Lakenhal
Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

"The Insignificance of Plymouth Colony"

If the churches of the Bay then sought the advice of Plymouth about details it would be because they were already predisposed to erect a Congregational regime, and because **they would have proceeded along essentially the same line had there been no Plymouth at all.**

—Perry Miller, *Orthodoxy in Massachusetts 1630-1650* (1933), p. 128

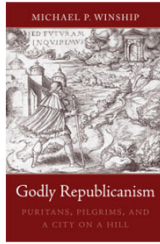
The place of the Pilgrim Fathers in American history can best be stated by a paradox. **Of slight importance in their own time**, they are of great and increasing significance in our time...The first half of this paradox, **the insignificance of Plymouth Colony in the colonial era**, is one upon which almost all American historians are now agreed.

—Samuel Eliot Morison, "The Pilgrim Fathers: The Significance in History," address delivered in Plymouth, 1951

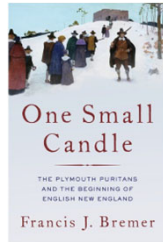
When we...discover William Bradford lauding **the pathetically unimportant Plymouth church** as a "small candle" whose "light here kindled hath shone...in some sort to our whole nation," one reasonably may surmise an English rhetorical routine whose occasional appearance in New England does not necessarily entail a great and singular Errand.

—Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives: The Primitivist Dimension in Puritanism* (1988), p. 115

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Harvard University Press
Oxford University Press
2012



2020

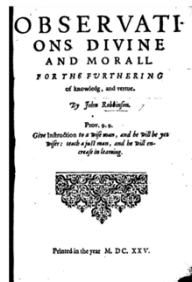
Edward Winslow (1595–1655)

educated King's School, Worcester Cathedral
portrait painted London, 1651, now in Pilgrim Hall Museum
in public domain through Wikimedia Commons





NB: "First published in Latin"



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John Robinson, *Observations Divine, and Morall* (1625)

23. Of Books, and Writings

monly according to the last *Book* which they read. It is
 best for ordinarie capacities to travel in some few *Books*
 (though by occasion they may lye into many, and the
 same picked by good advice, of unpariall, and experi-
 enced men; and those thoroughly to digest, and dis-
 course upon; as it is best for weak stomachs to eat of
 few, and wholefom dishes: Which may also be done
 for further use, extension, and application, then the
 Author himself conceived, or at least, expressed.

9. Of Authoritie, and Reason

With these also we must join the consideration of such
 advantages, as the latter times have of the former, whose
 helpfull labours they enjoy: by which those which follow
 them (though in themselves meaner then they) are enabled
 to discern of many things better then the others that went
 before them; as a dwarf set upon the shoulders of a giant
 can see further then he.

1) You. Non teaching I question propounded by you. I judge it not law-
 2) full for you, being a ruling elder, as rom. 12. 7 & 8. 1 Tim. 5. 17. opposed to
 3) the elders, that teach, & exhort, and labors in word and doctrine; to
 4) which of sacraments are annexed; to administer them, nor convenient,
 5) if it were lawfull. Whether any learned man will come unto you, or
 6) not, I know not; If any do; you must Confutem capere in arena
 7) Be you most hartely saluted, & you wife with you, both from me, & mine
 8) Your god, & ours, and if god of all his, bring us together if it be his will, &
 9) keep us in the mean while, and always to his glory, and make us servit-
 able to his majesty, and faithfull to the end. Amen.
 Leyden Dec: 20
 1623.
 your very loving brother
 John Robinson

Bradford, *Of Plimoth Plantation*, Book 2, Anno 1624, ms. p. 115
 Letter of John Robinson to William Brewster

I wonder what madnes hath caught
 mens minds too set larning at naught
 For when god had great works too doe
 he alwayes fitted men thereto
 Moyses in Egypt was learned
 when hee from thence gods people led
 Who mighty was in word & deed
 and meeete his people for too feed... (lines 239-46)

and Christe sente not the twelve abroad
 till knowledge of the tungen they had
 And alse what was meeete from them
 the nations for to wine & gaine
 how learned was the apostell [sic] paul
 employed in labours more then all
 The Heathen Poets he then knew
 and great learned men he overthrew... (lines 251-58)

Ho what great madnes would it bee
 and what Confusions should wee see
 errour the truth would under mine
 to barbarisme all would decline (lines 281-84)

William Bradford, "On the Various Heresies" (ca. 1655)
 from the section on Quakers

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¶.ob. Children not catechised, nor taught to read.
Ans. neither is true; for divers take pains with their owne as they can.
Indeede we have no common schools for want of a fit person, or hitherto
means to maintaine one; though we desire now to beginne.

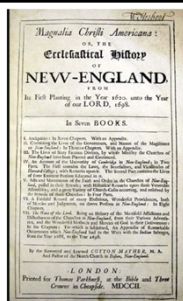
Bradford, *Of Plimoth Plantation*, Book 2, Anno 1624, ms. p. 112
Complaint by disgruntled settlers and the Pilgrims' response

A "Dame School" at Plymouth?

"The 11 of Feb: 1635, Benjamin Eaton, the sone of Francis Eaton, of late deceased, was, by the Governor & Assistantes, with his mothers consent, put to **Bridgett Fuller**, widow, for 14 years, shee being to **keep him at school** 2 years, & to imploy him in such service as she saw good & he should be fitt..."

—*Records of the Colony of New Plymouth: Court Orders*, Vol. I, 1633-1649 (1855), pp. 36-37

For more on Bridget Fuller, see Donna Watkins, *Weaker Vessels*, pp. 102-4 and 221-24.



§. 2. Sometimes during the Life, but always after the Death of Governour Bradford, even until his own, Mr. Thomas Prince, was chosen Governour of Plymouth. He was a Gentleman whose Natural Parts exceeded his Acquired; but the want and worth of Acquired Parts was a thing so sensible unto him, that Plymouth perhaps never had a greater Means of Learning in it: It was he that in spite of much Contradiction, procured Revenues for the Support of Grammar-Schools in that Colony. About the time of Governour

Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702), Book 2, Chapter 2
On Thomas Prence (Prince) and education in Plymouth

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Education in Plymouth Colony I

3 June 1662: "It is proposed by the Court unto the severall Townships of this Jurisdiction as a thinge they ought to take into their serious consideration That some course may be taken that in every Towne there may be a Schoolmaster sett up to traine up children to reading and writing."
—*Records of the Colony of New Plymouth: Laws 1623-1682*, ed. David Pulsifer (Boston, 1861), p. 142

13 December 1670: "Att the said meeting the said John Morton proffered to teach the children and youth of the towne to **Read and write and Cast accounts** on Reasonable considerations."
—*Records of the Town of Plymouth: Vol. I: 1636 to 1705* (Plymouth, 1889), p. 115

"Att a towne Meeting held att the meeting house att Plymouth the **20th day of May 1672:** The Towne did agree and unanimously voate and Conclude that their lands Att Sepecan Agawaam and places adjacent; the profitts and benefitts thereof shalbee Improved and Employed for and towards the Maintenance of **the free Schoole now begun and erected att Plymouth**; and that the profitts and benefitts thereof shall noe way [be] estranged from the said use..."
—*Records of the Town of Plymouth: Vol. I: 1636 to 1705* (Plymouth, 1889), p. 124

4 July 1672: "It is ordered by the Court that the charge of **the free Schoole**, which is three and thirty pounds a yeare shalbe defrayed by the Treasurer out of the profitts arising by the ffishing att the Cape untill such Time as that the minds of the freemen be knowne concerning it which wilbe returned to the next Court of election."
—*Records of the Colony of New Plymouth: Laws 1623-1682*, p. 233

4 June 1674: "This Court having received by the deputies of the severall townes the signification of the minds of the Major pte of the freemen of this Collonie that all the profitts of the ffishing att Cape Code granted by the Court for **the erecting and Maintaining of a Schoole** be still continued for that end if a **competent Number of Scollars** shall appear to be devoted therunto, which the Court Judges **not to be less then eight or ten**..."
—*Records of the Colony of New Plymouth: Laws 1623-1682*, p. 237

Education in Plymouth Colony II

1 November 1677: "fforasmuch as **the Maintainance of good literature** doth much tend to the advancement of the weale and flourishing estate of societies and Republicques

This Court does therefore order; That in whatsoever Township in this Government consisting of **fifty families or upwards**; any meet man shalbe obtained to teach a **Gramer schoole** such townshipp shall allow att least twelve pounds in currant marchantable pay to be raised by rate on all the Inhabitants of such Towne and those that have the more emediate benefitt thereof by their childrens going to scoole with what others may voulentarily give to promote soe good a work and generall good, shall make up the resedue Nessesarie to maintain the same and that the profitts arising of the Cape ffishing; heertofore ordered to maintaine a Gramer scoole in this Collonie, be distributed to such Townes as have such Gramer schooles for the maintainance thereof...

—*Records of the Colony of New Plymouth: Laws 1623-1682*, pp. 246-47

Education of Girls in Plymouth Colony?
A Tantalizing Record from August, 1664

"Rehoboth, the seaventh of August, 1664. Wee, whose names are subscribed heerto, doe heerby signify to all psons whom it may concerne, that Elizabeth Walker, the daughter of Phillip Walker, of the towne of Rehoboth, was accidentally drowned; **shee, being sent to scoole**, was found alsoe accidentally in the river first by two youthes...From the testimony of the afor specified psons...we, the subscribers, conceive that the child, which was **two yeares and an half old**, before specified, came accidentally to her end."

—*Records of the Colony of New Plymouth: Court Orders, Vol. IV 1661-1668*, 83-4
Donna A. Watkins, *Weaker Vessels: The Women and Children of Plymouth Colony*, p. 187

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Education in 17th-Century Massachusetts Colony

1635: Boston Latin School founded. (It still exists, ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* as #1 public high school in Massachusetts.)

1636: Harvard College founded. (At last report, this institution still exists.)

1642: First Massachusetts School Law: "This Court, taking into consideration the great neglect of many parents & masters in training up their children in learning & labor...do hereupon order and decree, that in every towne the chosen men appointed for managing the prudentiall affaires of the same shall...have the power to take account from time to time of all parents and masters, and of their children, concerning their calling and impliment of their children, especially of their ability **to read & understand the principles of religion & the capitall laws of this country...**"

1647: Second Massachusetts School Law: "It being one chief project of that old deluder, Satan, to keep men from the knowledge of the Scriptures, as in former times by keeping them in an unknown tongue, so in these latter times by perswading from **the use of Tongues**, that so at least the true sense and meaning of the Originall might be clouded and corrupted with false glosses of Saint-seeming deceivers...it is therefore ordered that everie Township in this Jurisdiction, after the Lord hath increased them to **fifty Householdors** shall forthwith appoint one within their Town to teach all such children as shall resort to him to write and read...And it is farther ordered that where any Town shall increase to the number of **one hundred Families or Householdors**, they shall set up a **Grammar-School**, the Masters thereof being able to instruct youth so far as they may be fitted for the Universitie..."

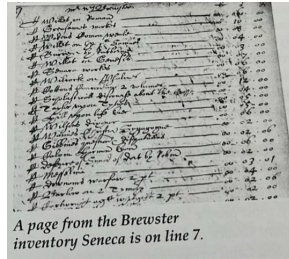
QUESTIONS?

Part 2

Books in Plymouth Colony:

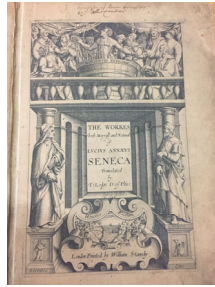
The Evidence of the Probate
Inventories

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A page from the Brewster inventory Seneca is on line 7.

"Seneca Workes"

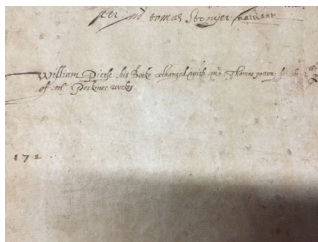
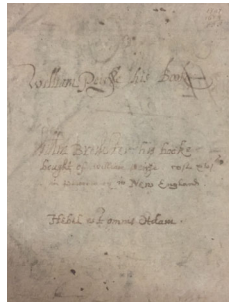


Title page, Thomas Lodge's translation of Seneca's prose works, 1st edition, 1614

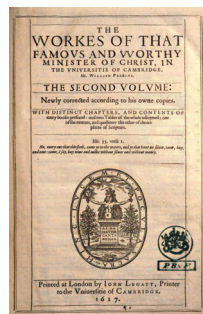
Inscriptions of William Peirce and William Brewster in Lodge's Seneca.

- "William Peirce his Booke"
- "Willm Brewster his booke bought of William Perse cost xvi s in Plimmouth in New England. Hebel est omnis Adam"

- Brewster's motto nests Latin within Hebrew: "A breath is every man" (based on Psalm 39:5, where the word for "breath" is rendered "vanity" in both the Geneva and KJV).



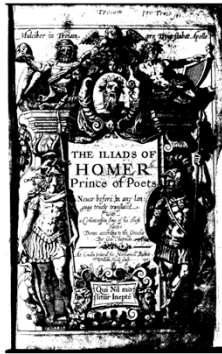
Inscription on back pastedown of Brewster's Seneca: "William Peirce: his Booke exchanged with Mr Thomas Potton: for the 2th pt of Mr Perkins workes"



Class 5: Beyond the Mayflower

"Homers Iliads"
entry in probate inventory of
Myles Standish

*The Iliads of Homer
Donne according to the Greeke By Geo: Chapman
London: Nathaniel Butter, 1611*



"Cecers comentaries"

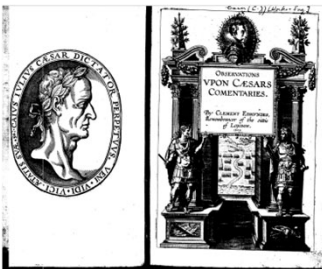
Entry in probate inventory of
Myles Standish
(2 December 1656)

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
The Courtship of Miles Standish (1858),

Fixed to the opposite wall was a shelf of books, and among them
Prominent three, distinguished alike for bulk and for binding:
Bariffe's Artillery Guide, and the Commentaries of Caesar,
Out of the Latin translated by Arthur Golding of London,
And, as if guarded by these, between them was standing the Bible....

Nothing was heard in the room but the hurrying pen of the stripling
[John Alden],
Or an occasional sigh from the laboring heart of the Captain,
Reading the marvellous words and achievements of Julius Caesar.
After a while he exclaimed, as he smote with his hand, palm
downwards,
Heavily on the page: "A wonderful man was this Caesar..."

Longfellow's inspiration for this scene:
Justin Winsor, "Abstracts of the Earliest Wills in the Probate Office,
Plymouth," *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 5 (1851),
pp. 335-38.



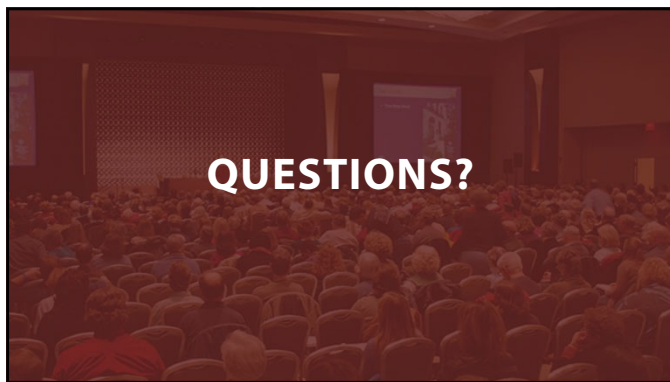
Sir Clement Edmondes
Observations upon Caesars Commentaries
London: Matthew Lownes, 1609



Illustration for Book 5.33 of Caesar's
Gallic Wars. Ambushed by the Gauls,
Sabinus and Cotta form their legionaries
into a circle.

Class 5: Beyond the Mayflower

Raleigh, *History of the World* (1611)Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*
trans. Philemon Holland (1601)



Part 3Governor Bradford's Use of
Secular Books

Class 5: Beyond the Mayflower

and if leses they have suffered, even
being thus arrived in a good harbor, and brought safe to land, they fell upon their knees
c. blessed of god of heaven, who had brought them over of such a furious ocean, and de-
livered them from all periles, & miseries thereof; againe to set their feete on firme
and stable earth, their proper element. And no marvel if they were thus joyefull.
epist. 53. Seeing also Seneca was affected with sailing a few miles on the coast of his owne
Italy; as he affirmed, that he had rather remaine twentie years on his way by
land, then pass by sea to any place in a short time, so tedious & dreadfull was it
unto him.

William Bradford, *Of Plimoth Plantation*, Book 1, Ch. 9 (MS p. 46)
The Mayflower arrives at Cape Cod (Provincetown Harbor).
Composed around 1630

ther. Then began I to require the Master to let me on some boare. But he
told me, that the boares of the ship were dangerous, and vnto land as and that
he feared nothing, more in a tempest then to beare vp for land, yet was I so
tormented that I remembered not my selfe of any danger: for a certaine long while
my desire to vomit, that provoked but prevaile me nothing in enjoying my
booke: it pained me infinitely, which stirred but voyded not choller. I there-
fore importuned the Master so, that will he will he, I compelled him to beare for
the boare; whereto when we came what needed, I expected not to do any thing
that I should commandeth, that the Prow of the Ship should be turned towards
the Sea, or that the Anchor should be let flip into the Sea, but remembering my
fellowes that I was accustomed to doo, I cast my selfe into the water covered in
Vnto mantle, as they are wont who wash themselves in colde water. What
thinkst thou I suffered, whilst I strive to escape these perils, whilst I feel, whilst
I make a way thorow these dangers? I know well, yet without cause that Mar-
iners feared the land. They are incredible things that I suffered, considering
that I could not support my selfe. Learne this of me, that the Sea was not so
incommod as the birth of my life, that it should cause ship-wrecke in all places. He
wanted cilly. For mine owne part I had rather remaine twenty yeeres upon
my way, then pass by Sea to any place. As soone as I had recovered my ho-
moke

Seneca, *Moral Epistles* 53.4-5;
Lodge translation (1614), p. 247

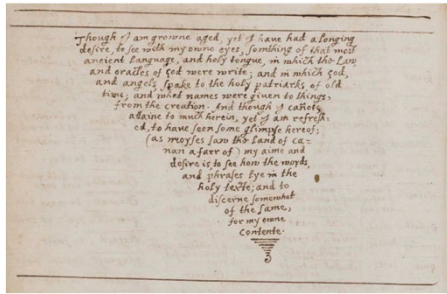
prevent a Consumption in his Virtue. But
after he had resided in Holland about half a
Score Years, he was one of those who bore a
part in that Hazardous and Generous Em-
prise of removing into New-England, with
part of the English Church at Leyden, where
at their first Landing, his dearest Consort ac-
cidentally falling Overboard, was drowned in
the Harbour; and the rest of his Days were
spent in the Services, and the Temptations, of
that American Wilderness.

Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi
Americana* (1702), Bk. 2, Ch. 1
Life of Bradford

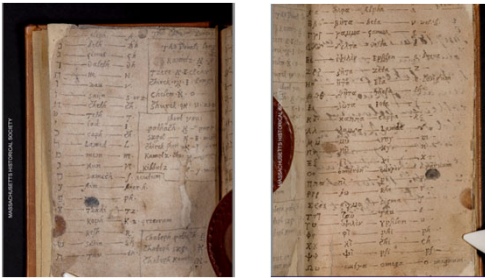
year; they having found themselves a week in their journey, and
come for their particular, having thereby with a great deal of labor
overcome hunger & famine. which make me remember a saying of Seneca,
epist. 123. that a great part of liberty is a well governed body, and to be
patients in all wants. They began now highly to prize corn, as more pre-
cious than gold. Which condition of theirs, did make
ment of a general employment. which condition of theirs, did make
us often think, of what it had cost in plimoth of a romans first begin-
ning, in a romans time. how every man contented him selfe with a acre
of land, and had no more assigned them. but that it was thought a
great reward, to receive at 3 hands of 3 peopls of Rome, a vnto of
corn. And long after, the greatest presents given to a Captaine, of
had got a victory over their enemies, was as much ground as they
could till in one day. And he was not counted a good, but a danger-
ous man; that would not content him selfe, of acres of land. As
also how they did pound their corn in mortars; as these people were
forced to doo many years before they could get a mill.

Bradford, *Of Plimoth Plantation*, Bk. 2, Anno 1624, MS pp. 115-116
Seneca, Pliny, and the harvest of 1624

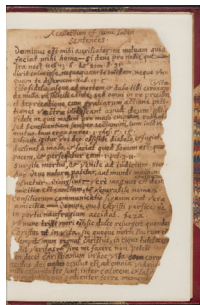
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The elderly Bradford on studying Hebrew: notation in MS on endpaper of
Of Plimoth Plantation



Bradford: Hebrew and Greek alphabets
from the notebook containing *The Third Dialogue*



The first of four pages of Latin extracts compiled by Bradford around 1655.

Class 5: Beyond the Mayflower



William Prynne (1600-1669), Parliamentarian politician and Presbyterian propagandist
Portrait by Wenceslaus Hollar



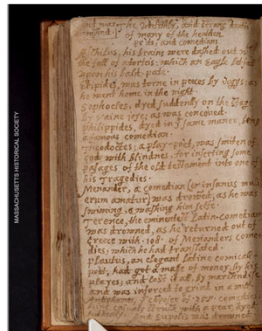
Title-page of *Histrio-Mastix* (1633)

"The untimly and strang deaths of
many of the heathen poets, and
comedians"

—a catalogue Bradford copied (with
abridgements) from Prynne's
Histrio-Mastix

—"comedians" = playwrights (both
tragic and comic)

—Bradford's addition to Prynne's list
is in the upper left-hand corner:
"Ovid was banished"

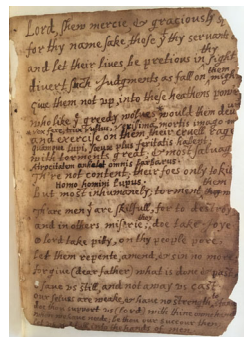


Selection from Bradford's poem
"Some Observations" (1655)

—Four interpolated Latin lines, the first
two from Ovid's poetry of exile, *Tristia* 5.7:

"savage tongue, grim faces, most
accurate image of death"

"like wolves, but they have even more cruel
savagery"



Class 5: Beyond the Mayflower



