

THE INFLUENCE OF JOHN PHILIPS ON  
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY POETRY

by

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Bachelor of Arts

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Edmond, Oklahoma

May, 1963

Submitted to the Faculty of  
the Graduate School of the  
Oklahoma State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS  
May, 1966

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## PREFACE

A study of the poetic techniques of John Philips reveals that he was an adept imitator of Milton's complex style. The run-on line, elision of words, Latinisms, use of exotic and proper names, epic similes, inverted word order, conversion of one part of speech into another, enjambement, apposition, parenthesis, unusual compounds--all the artful devices of Milton's poetry were mastered by Philips. His four major poems, "The Splendid Shilling," "Bleinheim," "Cerealia," and Cyder, were important elements in the development of eighteenth-century parody, blank verse, and georgic poetry. The justification for this study lies more in the historical importance of Philips in the evolution of English literature than in the intrinsic worth of his poetry.

I wish to thank my father, Mark Allen Everett, M.D., for his support, patience, and encouragement in the writing of this thesis. Further gratitude is due Dr. Claude Arnold of Central State College, whose lively interest in English literature inspired my pursuit of graduate study in the field. Finally, indebtedness is acknowledged to Drs. Loyd Douglas and Samuel H. Woods for their direction of this work.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

John Philips (1676-1709) is one of that numerous breed of minor English poets whose name is familiar only to scholars and whose works are approached primarily by webbing spiders and indiscriminate dust distributors on library shelves. Yet, he occupied a position of considerable importance in the development of eighteenth-century English literature. His poetry was read and discussed by the major literary figures of his age. "The Splendid Shilling" is acknowledged as the first and most accomplished burlesque of grand Miltonic style--a style that was one of the influential elements in the development of eighteenth-century prosody. The popular and critical reception of Philips's four poems in English<sup>1</sup> placed him in the vanguard of blank verse poets who were to storm and eventually conquer the citadel of the heroic couplet. His skill at burlesque and parody was pre-eminent in an age that specialized in such genres, and he in

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<sup>1</sup>"The Splendid Shilling," 1701, "Bleinheim," 1705, "Cerealia," 1706, and Cyder, 1708. Several poems in the Miltonic style occasionally credited to Philips, including "Ode to a Lady with Milton's Paradise Lost" and "Poem on the Memorable Fall of Chloe's Piss Pot," are of doubtful origin and have not been considered here. Nor does his non-Miltonic Latin poem "Ode Ad Henricum St. John," written in acknowledgment of a present of wine and tobacco, have a place in this study.

turn was satirized and widely emulated. Finally, his Georgic imitation Cyder is recognized as the earliest of those didactic poems in Miltonic blank verse which were to become common in the eighteenth century.

Professor H. G. De Maar, in his History of Modern English Romanticism, discusses the importance of minor writers such as John Philips in the historical development of a nation's literature:

The history of literature is the history of the voice of a nation, not the history of a number of isolated geniuses. These have their place in the history of art. But the historian of literature is concerned with the flux and reflux of influences and tendencies, of which the minor figures are essentially and peculiarly the mirrors. For a "great" author creates his own conventions; he exerts influence on the future only because he rejects that of the past. Thus in literary history the critical importance of minor exceeds that of the major figures, whose importance is aesthetic rather than historical. Moreover, as a symptom of popular interest and influence, the minor figures are still more valuable.<sup>2</sup>

Whether or not one accepts this thesis, one can agree with De Maar that the intrinsic quality of verse "does not detract one jot from its historic significance."<sup>3</sup> Regardless of the aesthetic value of the poetry of John Philips, his highly significant influence on the development of eighteenth-century verse can be conclusively documented.

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<sup>2</sup>Harko G. De Maar, A History of Modern English Romanticism (Oxford, 1924), Vol. I, p. 163.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 163

## CHAPTER II

### THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY REPUTATION OF JOHN PHILIPS

A sound estimation of a writer's literary reputation in his own age may be gained by perusal of the judgments of his peers. The literature of the eighteenth century is rife with allusions to the works of John Philips. Shortly after his death in 1709, a friend and Oxford school-mate, Edmund Smith, published "A Poem on the Death of Mr. John Philips." The first thirteen lines set the tone of the work:

Oh! various Bard, you all our Pow'rs control,  
You now disturb, and now divert the Soul:  
Milton and Butler in thy Muse combine,  
Above the last thy manly Beauties shine;  
For as I've seen when Rival Wits contend,  
One gayly charge, one gravely wise defend;  
This on quick Turns and Points in vain relies,  
This with a Look demure, and stedy Eyes,  
With dry Rebukes, or sneering Praise replies.  
So thy grave Lines extort a juster Smile,  
Reach Butler's Fancy, but surpass his Style;  
He speaks Scarron's low Phrase in humble Strains,  
In Thee the solemn Air of great Cervantes reigns.

In his "Life" of Edmund Smith, Samuel Johnson noted that the elegy for Philips was "a poem which justice must place among the best elegies which our language can shew, an elegant mixture of fondness and admiration, of dignity and softness."<sup>4</sup> Johnson's work emphasized Smith's relationship to Philips and included a quotation by Smith's biographer,

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<sup>4</sup>Samuel Johnson, Lives of the English Poets, ed. R. H. Hill (Oxford, 1938), Vol. I, p. 359.

Thomas Oldisworth: "His condolence for the death of Mr. Philips is full of the noblest beauties, and hath done justice to the ashes of that second Milton, whose writings will last as long as the English language, generosity, and valour."<sup>5</sup> Smith was engaged upon writing a "Prefatory Discourse" to his elegy, in which Philips's life was to be treated, but he himself died before it was finished. Johnson, in discussing "The Splendid Shilling," quoted from the Bodleian manuscripts of Smith's work:

The contrariety of style to the subject pleases the more strongly, because it is more surprising; the expectation of the reader is pleasantly deceived, who expects an humble style from the subject, or a great subject from the style. It pleases the more universally because it is agreeable to the taste both of the grave and merry: but more particularly so to those who have a relish of the best writers, and the noblest sort of poetry.<sup>6</sup>

Johnson offered his own evaluation of "The Splendid Shilling" in his "Life" of Philips:

"The Splendid Shilling" has the uncommon merit of an original design, unless it may be thought to be precluded by the ancient "Centos." To degrade the sounding words and stately construction of Milton, by an application to the lowest and most trivial things gratifies the mind with a momentary triumph over that grandeur which hitherto held its captives in admiration; the words and things are presented with a new appearance, and novelty is always grateful where it gives no pain.

But the merit of such performances begins and ends with the first author. He that should again adapt Milton's phrase to the gross incidents of

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<sup>5</sup>Thomas Oldisworth, The Life and Works of Mr. Edmund Smith (Oxford, 1713). Cited in Johnson, p. 358.

<sup>6</sup>Johnson, p. 360.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 222.



common life, and even adapt it with more art  
 . . . must yet expect but a small part of the  
 praise which Philips has obtained; he can only  
 hope to be considered the repeater of a jest.<sup>7</sup>

For The Tatler Addison wrote a reverie of a shilling in  
 which it described two adventures: "The first was, my being  
 in a Poet's Pocket, who was so taken with the Brightness and  
 Novelty of my appearance, that it gave Occasion to the finest  
 Burlesque Poem in the British Language, Entitled, from me,  
 'The Splendid Shilling.'"<sup>8</sup> George Sewell, the first biogra-  
 pher of Philips, quoted Addison and offered his own criticism:

. . . Nor was it only the finest of that kind  
 in our Tongue, but handled in a manner quite  
 different from what had been made use of by any  
 author of our own, or other nations, the Senti-  
 ments and Style being in this both new; whereas  
 in those the Jest lies more in Allusions to the  
 Thoughts and Fables of the Ancients, than in the  
 Pomp of the Expression. The same Humour is con-  
 tinued thro' the whole, and not unnaturally diver-  
 sified, as most Poems of that Nature have been  
 before. Out of that Variety of Circumstances,  
 which his fruitful invention must suggest to him  
 on such a Subject, he has not chosen any but what  
 are diverting to every Reader, and some, that none  
 but his inimitable Dress could have made divert-  
 ing to any. When we read it, we are betrad'd  
 into a Pleasure that we could not expect; tho' at  
 the same time, the Sublimity of the Style, and  
 the Gravity of the Phrase, seem to chastise that  
 Laughter which they provoke.<sup>9</sup>

Joseph Warton depicted the poem as "that admirable copy  
 of the solemn irony of Cervantes; who is the father and un-  
 rivaled model of the true mock-heroic." In Adventurer #  
 133, 1754, Warton included "The Splendid Shilling" in "pieces

<sup>8</sup> Joseph Addison, The Tatler, 249 (November 9, 1710).

<sup>9</sup> George Sewell, Life and Character of Mr. John Phil-  
 ips, (London, 1712), pp. 13-14.

of humour which antiquity cannot equal, much less excel."

Thomas Newbery's Art of Poetry, 1762, selected "The Splendid Shilling" to represent the burlesque kind of writing: "In this poem the author has handled a low subject in the lofty stile and numbers of Milton; in which way of writing Mr. Philips has been imitated by several, but none have come up to the humour and happy turn of the original." In the preface to his translation of Voltaire's "Henriade," Canto I, 1732, John Lockman touched upon the shilling poem:

We do not in this Translation nor in that of the Art of Poetry, find any of those Flatus's and Swellings which are mistaken for Milton's Sublime, and often made use of mal a propos and very unnaturally. In Philips' Burlesque Poem, "The Splendid Shilling" the Miltonic Manner succeeded, because the Tumidity or false Pomp of the Verse increased the Ridiculum, which was the Subject of the Poem; but in serious Pieces such Affectation does really produce the Ridiculum, where the Sublime was intended.

Thomas Warton, in his "Panegyric on Oxford Ale," 1750, after picturing Adam exiled from the joys of Eden, wrote:

Thus too the matchless bard, whose lay resounds  
The SPLENDID SHILLING praise, in nightly gloom  
Of Lonesome garret, pin'd for cheerful Ale;  
Whose steps in verse Miltonic I pursue,  
Mean follower: like him with honest love  
Of Ale divine inspir'd, and love of sone.  
But long may bounteous Heav'n with watchful care  
Avert his hapless lot!

Some of the poets celebrating Philips spoke of him in his own burlesque manner:

Philips, who's by the "Shilling" known,  
Ne'er saw a Shilling of his own,

wrote Lady Winchelsea in "A Tale of the Miser and Poet." Edward Pickering Rich, in inscribing a poem to the author of

"The Lost Guinea" (who had professed himself "an entire stranger to "The Splendid Shilling"), opened with the passage:

A Shilling Philips (splendid Bard!) could praise  
 And think it worthy of immortal Lays;  
 You that are more in Pocket, if not Verse,  
 May thank your stars, and bless that you're no worse.<sup>11</sup>

Leonard Welstead, in "A Poem to the Memory of the Incomparable Mr. Philips," 1710, prophesied that Philips was as sure of immortality as Virgil; Cyder was

Of equal Worth, Since so divinely sung  
 To Maro's Vintage, and shall last as long.

Such tributes, however, were too light in tone for some of the poet's admirers. William King refused at least half seriously to despair of contemporary poetry because "the living Muse"<sup>12</sup> was, among others, responsible for Philips. Matthew Prior felt that "Mr. Philips, had he lived, would have excelled"<sup>13</sup> in blank verse. Thomas Tickell considered Philips as great a poet as Milton, "whilst in Conduct he was his superior."<sup>14</sup>

The eighteenth century thoroughly agreed with Cowper's succinct evaluation of John Philips's poetic ability when

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<sup>11</sup>Edward P. Rich, Original Poems on Several Occasions (London, 1720), p. 20. Cited in Loyd-Thomas, p. xxii.

<sup>12</sup>William King, The Original Works of William King, "The Art of Love" (London, 1776), Vol. III, p. 185.

<sup>13</sup>Matthew Prior, Solomon on the Vanity of the World, ed. A. R. Waller (Oxford, 1905), p. 260.

<sup>14</sup>Thomas Tickell, Nicols' Select Collection (Oxford, 1780), Vol. VIII, pp. 441-442. Cited in Loyd-Thomas, pp. xxxv-xxxvi.

he wrote, in The Task, 1785:

And in thy numbers, Philips, shines for aye  
The solitary shilling.

William Somerville's blank verse poem The Chase, 1735, was modeled on Milton and Philips. In the "Epistle to Mr. Thomson" he advises the aspiring poet to

Read Philips much, consider Milton more;  
But from their dross extract the purer ore.

Philips was one of Somerville's favorite authors; his "Hobbinol," dedicated to Hogarth, makes frequent references to "The Splendid Shilling." Although Pope did not mention the name, he made an obvious reference to Philips's poetic ability in The Dunciad, 1728-1743:

Then (tho' rejected by our heavn'ly Bard)  
Great Milton's imitator shall be heard;  
Whose lofty Genius not alone affords  
(As snarling Momi urge) bombastic words;  
But with true Rage inspir'd he takes his flight,  
And bravely reaches his old Masters Height.  
The muse unknown whose strong, but factious Lay,  
Pretends the Ages Vices to display;  
Shall here his biting Wit and Satyr cease,  
Suspend his Malice, and consent to praise,  
Rhimer and Walsh shall o'er the Work preside,  
And ev'ry Muse's Rage and Fancy Guide.

As early as 1707 Thomas Brown had been provoked to write some lines "To the Ingenious Mr. John Philips of Oxon, on the Many Scurvey Imitators of Milton":

. . . No, Philips, by the Muses tis a Shame  
It lessens not Great Milton's Sacred Name;  
And brighter shines by Imitators Cares.  
If any, you an equal Race can run,  
Who are Apollo's Darling Eldest Son.  
Such soaring Numbers as Great Milton wrote,  
Your Fancy suit, and elevated Thought.  
The Man and Arms you sung with Conquest crown'd,  
Then Thund'ring Cannons shook Blenheimian Ground.  
Advance at once your own and Milton's Name,  
You have I promise you a Lovely Theme;

Sing on, and let your lofty Numbers be  
With Milton's Genius grad'd and Victory.

John Gay's "Wine," published in 1708, is a direct imitation of Philips's "The Splendid Shilling" and Cyder. Gay read and studied Milton, but Philips was "influential in teaching him the mock-heroic strain."<sup>15</sup> The following lines from "Wine" are typical of the poem's many references to Philipsian themes or subjects:

Had the Oxonian bard thy praise rehears'd,  
His muse had yet retain'd her wonted height;  
Such as of late o'er Blenheim's field she soar'd  
Aerial, now in Ariconian bogs  
She lies inglorious floundering, like her theme  
Languid and faint, and on damp wing immerg'd  
In acid juice in vain attempts to rise.

In the nineteenth century Hazlitt held that "The Splendid Shilling" "makes the fame of this poet--it was a lucky thought happily executed."<sup>16</sup> Leigh Hunt said much the same thing at greater length: "His [Philips's] serious imitations of Milton are not worth a penny; but his burlesque of the style of Paradise Lost . . . is still welcome to the lover of wit."<sup>17</sup> Crabbe invoked the muse in his "Letter on Inns" at the opening of The Borough, XI, in these words:

Inns are this Subject--'tis an ill-drawn Lot,  
So, thou who gravely triflest, fail me not.  
Fail not, but haste, and to my memory bring  
Scenes yet unsung which few would choose to sing:

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<sup>15</sup>De Maar, p. 86.

<sup>16</sup>William Hazlitt, Collected Works, ed. A. R. Waller and Arnold Glover (Oxford, 1902), Vol. V., p. 373.

<sup>17</sup>Leigh Hunt, Wit and Humour (London, 1846), pp. 274-275.

Thou mad'st a Shilling splendid; thou hast thrown  
On humble Themes the Graces all thine own.

Philips's eighteenth-century popularity is also shown by the translations of his work. Thomas Holland and Thomas Tyrwhitt wrote Latin versions of "The Splendid Shilling," and there is an anonymous "Nummus Splendidus" of 1777. The manuscript of a Latin rendering of Cyder, by Richard Phelps, is to be seen in the Hereford Public Library,<sup>18</sup> and Cyder was also translated into Tuscan by Count Magalotti.<sup>19</sup> Two Italian editions of "The Splendid Shilling" were published in the middle of the century, and it was even turned into rhyme.<sup>20</sup>

Eighteenth-century praise of Philips's poetic ability was not limited to "The Splendid Shilling." Cyder was an immensely popular work and became the prototype of many blank verse poems on such subjects as "Wine," The Chase, "The Fleece," etc. Poets of didactic blank verse and of the "Commercial epic" looked back to Philips as the pioneer in this kind of writing. He was invoked by Christopher Smart as the presiding genius of "The Hop Garden," and James Grainger links him with Hesiod and Virgil in "The Sugar Cane." Philip Miller, a renowned gardener and botanist, told Samuel Johnson that "There were many books written on the same subject in prose which do not contain so much truth

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<sup>18</sup>De Maar, p. 169.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 169-170.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 169.

as that poem."<sup>21</sup> Johnson himself felt that Cyder was Philips's "greatest work, and . . . need not shun the presence of the original."<sup>22</sup> Henry Felton, in his Dissertation on Reading the Classics, 1753, was of the opinion that "Philips' fame would endure as long as Blenheim is remembered or cyder drunk in England." Thomas Campbell noted Felton's praise, and commented:

He [Felton] might have added, as long as tobacco shall be smoked: for Philips has written more meritoriously about the Indian weed, than about his native apple; and his Muse is more in her element amidst the smoke of the pipe than of the battle. . . . His Splendid Shilling is the earliest and one of the best, of our parodies; but Blenheim is as completely a burlesque upon Milton as The Splendid Shilling, though it was written and read with gravity. In describing his hero, Marlborough, stepping out of Queen Anne's drawing room, he unconsciously carries the mock-heroic to perfection.<sup>23</sup>

William Heard's "Sentimental Journey to Bath, Bristol, and their Environs," 1778, pictures Philips as "the Cyder Poet":

. . . where, in raptur'd fancy, we beheld  
The blooming fruits such floods of cyder yield;  
Thy liquor, Philips, whose enchanting tongue  
So well the beauties of Pomona sung.

Philosopher David Hume, wishing to expand the point that "Men of wit always turn the discourse on subjects that are entertaining to the imagination; and poets never present any objects but such as are of the same nature," comments upon one of Philips's works: "Mr. Philips has chosen Cider for

<sup>21</sup>Johnson, p. 224.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 220.

<sup>23</sup>Thomas Campbell, Specimens of the British Poets (London, 1841), p. 318.

the subject of an excellent poem. Beer would not have been so proper, as being neither so agreeable to the taste nor eye. But he would certainly have preferred wine to either of them, could his native country have afforded him so agreeable a liquor."<sup>24</sup>

"Bleinheim" also came in for some high praise. Elijah Fenton, Pope's assistant in the translation of the Odyssey, maintained in a letter to Thomas Warton that "I'll never imitate Milton more till the author of 'Bleinheim' be forgotten."<sup>25</sup> Edmund Smith's "Poem on the Death of Mr. John Philips" contains a long passage intimating that France was prostrated no less by Philips's poetry than by Marlborough's military skills. James Conduit, a Westminster Scholar, developed a similar theme at some length in praising "Bleinheim"<sup>26</sup>.

YE can't a Monument more lasting raise  
 Long to perpetuate your Churchill's Praise,  
 Not costly Pyramids of Pride which must  
 With their frail Hero moulder into Dust;  
 No bright Emblaz'nary, or proud Array,  
 A gaudy Pomp that lasts but for a Day:  
 In Philips Numbers he'll for ever shine,  
 He breathes in every Word, and lives in every Line.  
 O! with what Spirit does the Poet write,  
 Not with a greater did his Hero fight.  
 He scorns a tedious Journal to rehearse  
 Set off with nothing but the Chink of Verse.  
 That dull sweet Ornament let others use  
 T'adorn their thoughtless Work, and humble Muse;

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<sup>24</sup>David Hume, A Treatise of Human Nature, ed. A. D. Lindsay (London, 1909), Vol. II, p. 77.

<sup>25</sup>J. L. Wood, Memoirs of Thomas Warton (London, 1912), p. 203.

<sup>26</sup>James Conduit, "A Copy of Verses on Mr. Philips' Poem. . . ." (1705), p. 9. Cited in Loyd-Thomas, p. xxxi.



Great Philips soars Aerial, and sings  
 Sublime in mighty Numbers mighty Things:  
 Not in a loftier Strain or louder String  
 Did Homer once his great Achilles sing.

Philips's works were by no means received with universal acclaim by his contemporaries and immediate successors. Critics such as Samuel Johnson could be ambivalent in their appreciation of his efforts. The revered Doctor, in his "Life" of Philips, praised Cyder as being worthy of Virgil in one breath, and issued a blanket condemnation of his Miltonic-blank-verse vehicle in the next: "He imitates Milton's numbers indeed, but imitates them very injudiciously. Deformity is easily copied; and whatever there is in Milton which the reader wishes away, all that is obsolete, peculiar, or licentious, is accumulated with great care by Philips." The earliest attack upon Philips (an attack that incidentally showed his contemporary influence and popularity) was an anonymous piece in 1709 bearing the inscription "Milton's Sublimity Asserted: in a Poem Occasion'd by a late Celebrated Piece, entitled, Cyder, A Poem; In Blank Verse, by Philo-Milton."<sup>27</sup> In the preface the author discusses the man he is to attack:

I do not think there is any Work extant, that hath alarm'd the World more than his; and bin, I may say, some years so much the talk and hopes of the Publick, especially those under his own Meridian. Nor indeed has it fail'd in giving great satisfaction, being generally caressed with that fondness, which almost deserves the name of Dotage; Though the success is not so wonderful, if we believe the Poet that "Expectation makes the Blessing dear."

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<sup>27</sup>Cited in De Maar, p. 138.

Wherein all its Beauties consist is not obvious, I dare presume to every Reader; it being in many places made Artificially dark, to prevent every common Understanding from peeping into the bottom of it; but such is the Genius of this age, to admire Name and Novelty, that they have now raised the Author to the highest Class in the Muses School; Nor will he need any future Apotheosis, to immortalize his Name, as long as Cyder, A Poem, lies securely bound in sheeps-skin. For we may take notice, that notwithstanding he fails so far short, both of the Diction and Harmony of Milton; Yet he is addressed with the title of being his Poetical Son, as Milton was of Spenser. . . .

The blank verse poem following the preface attacks Philips in a choleric vein:

And whilst in moving Numbers he [Milton] excites  
The Vig'rous Soul to the sublimest Thoughts;  
Thou [Philips] like a Bankrupt Wit, with Cheerful Ale,  
And Voice; dull as Bag-popes Drone, dost Buzz  
Incessant, Thy self-pleasing Madrigal  
Of Shilling, Breeches, and Chimera's Dire.

At Pope's death, the Rev. John Brown deplored the state of satire before that satirist and accused "The Splendid Shilling" of immorality.<sup>28</sup> Sir Richard Blackmore advised "Milton's Imitator no more to Torture our Language, to torment our Ear."<sup>29</sup> In his biting "Advice to the Poets, a Poem Occasioned by the Wonderful Success of Her Majesty's Arms, under the conduct of the Duke of Marlborough, Flanders," Blackmore aimed his attack at Philips's "Bleinheim":

Ye mercenary Wits, who Rime for Bread,  
Ye unfledg'd Muses, this high Subject dread.  
Let not th' inferior Race, who can indite  
A pretty Prologue, or a sonnet write;  
Tho' none so forward are, so bold as they,

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<sup>28</sup>John Brown, "An Essay on Satire," Dodsley's Collection (London, 1748), p. 19. Cited in De Maar, p. 146.

<sup>29</sup>Cited in Loyd-Thomas, p. xxix.

Make on this Theme an Impotent Essay.  
 All who can raise a Shed, must not presume  
 To frame a Palace, or erect a Dome.  
 No more let Milton's Imitator dare  
 Torture our Language, to torment our Ear  
 With Numbers harsher than the Din of War.  
 Let him no more his horrid Muse employ  
 In uncouth Strains, pure English to destroy,  
 And from its Ruins, yell his hideous Joy.  
 Away, ye Triflers, who all Rule disdain,  
 Who in Pindaric sing Philander's Pain,  
 And camps and Arms, in Paster-Fido's Strain.  
 Hence, vain Pretenders to the Song sublime,  
 Turners of Verse, and Finishers of Rime,  
 By flying Numbers, and harmonious Sound:  
 Who without Fire, and mindless of Design,  
 Ply hard the Pump, and labour every Line,  
 To make, like empty Clouds, your Diction shine.  
 So many Masters of this tunefull Skill,  
 With their melodious Songs the kingdom fill,  
 That to compleat Poetic Eloquence,  
 Nothing is wanting, but Design, and Sense.

Gildon, in his Laws of Poetry, 1721, maintained that Philips never did "any thing worth looking on" other than "The Splendid Shilling." Pope felt that "Philips, in his Cyder, has succeeded extremely well in his imitation of it [Milton's style], but was quite wrong in endeavouring to imitate it on such a subject."<sup>30</sup>

Adverse judgments such as the above were rare in the eighteenth century. Even they, however, serve to illustrate the literary importance of Philips to his age. The number and variety of comments, both laudatory and disparaging, makes it evident that the reputation of Philips among his contemporaries was far greater than it is today.

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<sup>30</sup>Alexander Pope, Advice to the Poets, (Oxford, 1927, p. 10.

## CHAPTER III

### PHILIPS AND EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BURLESQUE

The number of direct imitations of the poems of John Philips would suggest that his contemporaries saw him as an important figure in the development of English prosody. Dozens of burlesques in blank verse may be recorded in the first half of the eighteenth century, many of which are closely imitative of "The Splendid Shilling." Indeed, Philips was one of the primary influences in a period which witnessed the flowering of parody, burlesque, and the mock-heroic, and which saw the production of such poems as Gay's The Shepherd's Week, Carey's Namby-Pamby, Brown's A Pipe of Tobacco, Shenstone's The School-Mistress, and, above all, Pope's The Rape of the Lock.

The neo-classical era was seriously concerned with the subject of burlesque: "Aside from the Aristotelian imitation and the theory of writing 'in the Spirit of' the masters, there was a large quantity of imitation in a more strictly derivative sense: a mimicry of the material or manner of an author or type, with exactness or with freedom, was often exercised."<sup>1</sup> As one of the masters, and with his

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<sup>1</sup>Richmond P. Bond, English Burlesque Poetry: 1700-1750 (Cambridge, Mass., 1932), p. 228.

highly individual manner, Milton was fair game for the parodists and imitators. Philips's "Splendid Shilling" and, to a lesser extent, Cyder, "Bleinheim," and "Cerealia," opened a veritable floodgate of Miltonic mimicry, with the style of Paradise Lost as the usual model for the burlesques. The satire of such pieces was directed either at Milton's poetic idiosyncrasies, at a particular subject being parodied (e.g., "The Splendid Shilling" laments, in a whimsically satiric vein, the position of the poet who hopes to make his living writing poetry), or at both. When a topic or person--rather than the style of Milton--was the butt of the burlesque, the use of Miltonic diction and syntax was frequently an acknowledgment of the lead of Philips.

John Philips was the first, the most popular, the most successful, and the most influential of the Milton parodists. This constitutes numerous "mosts" for a poet who did not write his first poem until he was twenty-four and who died shortly after his thirty-third birthday. From its publication in 1701 to the present day, Philips's "Splendid Shilling" has had no peers in the area of the Miltonic parody. Along with Addison's comment in 1710 that it was the finest burlesque poem in the British language, must go Goldsmith's commendation, in Beauties of English Poesy, that "This is reckoned the best parody of Milton in our language: it has been an hundred times imitated, without success,"<sup>2</sup> and Professor Richmond P.

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Oliver Goldsmith, Beauties of English Poesy (Oxford, 1767), p. 93.

Bond's conclusion that "John Philips's 'Splendid Shilling' was the first, perhaps the best, and certainly the most influential Miltonic burlesque."<sup>3</sup> Bond described the importance of Philips's first effort in these terms:

The influence of "The Splendid Shilling" on eighteenth-century poetry is too great and too various to admit of many dogmatic statements. The poem certainly pointed the way to Miltonic burlesque by providing a short, clever, and fair parody of the sublime style in blank verse. Its very title was attractive. It was widely read and very often reprinted, and it suggested several themes congenial to mock-heroic or parodic treatment. Though Miltonic imitation before Philips was rare and Miltonic burlesque unknown, it would be extravagant to assign to "The Splendid Shilling," or to the total output of Philips, the honor of more than a considerable influence in the first half of the eighteenth century. Over two dozen definite burlesques in blank verse may be recorded in those fifty years, the degree of influence from "The Splendid Shilling" on these items fluctuating from close imitation to entirely independent creation. The general influence of the famous parody is, of course, difficult of measurement, but it may be safely assumed that Philips's poem was the most powerful force in burlesque blank verse of the first half or of the whole, of the eighteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

Burlesque consists in "the use or imitation of serious matter or manner, made amusing by the creation of an incongruity between style and subject."<sup>5</sup> The word "burlesque" came into English from French, which had imported it from Italy, the Italian "burla" meaning "ridicule, joke, mockery."<sup>6</sup> "The

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<sup>3</sup>Bond, p. 105.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 105-106.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>6</sup>Eric Partridge, Origins: The Encyclopedia of Words (New York, 1958), p. 64.

"Splendid Shilling" parodied the style of Milton by treating a frivolous matter in his exalted diction and syntax. Thus, it fell into the classification of "high burlesque":

... the low burlesque places the subject above the style and consists of the travesty and the Hudibrastic, with the distinction between the two species that of degree and closeness of imitation; the high burlesque fixes the style above the subject and consists of the parody and the mock poem, with the same distinction of degree.<sup>7</sup>

The burlesque method of "The Splendid Shilling" was copied extensively by eighteenth-century poets. Professors Bond, De Maar, R. D. Havens, and M. G. Loyd-Thomas have noted scores of poems which were directly or indirectly influenced by either the style or content of the shilling poem or Cyder. Avowed stylistic imitations of the first work were Buck's "Geneva," 1734, Bramston's "Crooked Six-Pence" (a poem that followed "The Splendid Shilling" very closely), 1743, "Armour," 1724, and "Poverty," 1748. The author of "Bartholomew Fair," 1729, believed his poem "the only imitation of Mr. Philips' 'Splendid Shilling,' which is so great a Masterpiece in its kind."<sup>8</sup> "An Epistle from Oxon," 1731, Brown's "Fire," 1724, and Mitchell's "Shoe-Heel," 1727, and "Sick-Bed Soliloquy to An Empty Purse," 1735, also closely imitated "The Splendid Shilling." In the preface to "Shoe-Heel" Mitchell noted that "Mr. John Philips is the most considerable of Those who have attempted to add Importance and Dignity to small and trifling

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<sup>7</sup>Bond, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup>Cited in Bond, p. 107.

Subjects." Somerville invoked the spirit of Philips for his "Hobbinol," 1740, and mentioned him a number of times in the preface. "A Bacchanalian Rhapsody," 1746, closed with a compliment to the poetic skill of Philips.

Money or the lack of money was the obvious theme for the poet who sought to write a poem reminiscent of "The Splendid Shilling." A poetic gamut of coins was run in the eighteenth century: "Crooked Six-Pence," "Birmingham Half-penny," 1757, Mrs. Pennington's "Copper Farthing," 1763, "Soliloquy on the Last Shilling," 1773, "A Sick-Bed Soliloquy to An Empty Purse," 1759, and "Empty Purse, a Poem in Miltonics," 1750. John Fowler's "The Last Guinea," 1720, though not a burlesque of Milton's style, closely resembled "The Splendid Shilling" in subject and tone. In the preface to his poem, Fowler explained that he "feared censure because his subject too nearly resembled that of Philips's 'Splendid Shilling,' to which he was an entire stranger."<sup>9</sup>(2) Rich's "Last Penny," 1720, was inscribed to the author of "The Last Guinea" and mentioned Philips's famous burlesque. Mitchell, in "Verses on Sight of an Half-Penny, Found in Mr. Kenneth Campbell's Pocket, After his Death," 1729, complimented Butler, "the Prince of Pleasantry and Wit," and Philips, whose name would "last while Cyder is drunk and while One splendid Shilling is found in Britian's Isle." The first stanza of Ralph's non-Miltonic poem "On Half a Crown," 1720, runs:

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<sup>9</sup>Cited in Bond, p. 106.



If you have Sense, at least of Feeling,  
 A Theme like mine will surely win ye,  
 This Parent of a Splendid Shilling,  
 And younger Brother of a Guinea.

The destitute poet was fond of liquor, and various kinds of drink were naturally good subjects for ludicrous poems. Philips's Cyder and "Cerealia" influenced a number of poems in this vein. Professor Bond notes that Gay's "Wine," 1708, borrowed rather extensively from Philips, while Lady Winchilsea's Miltonic burlesque "Fanscomb Barn," 1713, dealt partly with drinking. "Geneva," "Gin," 1734, "A Bacchanalian Rhapsody," 1746, and "Small-Beer," 1746, treated the subject of drink as had Philips. Thomas Warton, in his "Panegyric on Oxford Ale," claimed to be "a mean follower" of Philips, the bard who "pin'd for cheerful ale." "A Tankard of Porter," 1760, "Oxford Ale," 1750, "The Cork-screw," 1760, and "Punch," 1769, all contain features reminiscent of the style or content of Cyder or "The Splendid Shilling."

Though "The Splendid Shilling" said nothing directly of college or college life, Professors Bond, De Maar, and Havens feel that a similar tone was suitable for and used in poems describing the student's world. Dr. Dodd's "A Day in Vacation at College," 1750, Woty's "Campanalogia," 1761, Lardner's "College Gibb," 1800, "An Epistle from Oxon," "The Copper Farthing," and Thomas Maurice's "School Box," 1775, used Philips as a model. Philips discussed food briefly in Cyder and his shilling poem, and his followers praised "Pudding, 1759, "Apple Dumpling," 1774, "Potatoes,"

1786, and "Good Eating," 1772. The passage on smoking in Philips's first work, according to Havens, inspired "The Tobacco-Stopper," 1760, and the 1738 poem "Verses on Bad Tobacco." The Philipsonian themes of penury and men and things of low estate were employed in Maxwell's "Poverty," 1748, "A Louse," 1773, "The Sweepers," 1774, "The Faded Coat Collar," 1781, "The Cat," 1796, "Washing Day," 1797, and "An Old Pair of Boots," 1797.

Scores of poems on such subjects are to be found in English literature. The influence of Philips is obvious in most of them. Admittedly, few contain anything of lasting value and even fewer are read today. But the important point is that in the eighteenth century they were typical examples of the minor verse of the period and were widely circulated among the literate public. They were an important element in the development and popularization of burlesque, parody, and the mock-heroic. The fact that a majority of such poems show the influence of Philips marks him as a relatively important figure in the development of the eighteenth-century satiric spirit.

## CHAPTER IV

### PHILIPS AND EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BLANK VERSE

When John Philips wrote "The Splendid Shilling," "Bleinheim," "Cerealia," and Cyder, his purpose was not to belittle or ridicule the manner of his "darling" Milton. No better proof of the statement that burlesque may be born of admiration can be produced than these works. Philips knew and loved his Milton, and he saw nothing amiss in applying Miltonic traits to verse on non-Miltonic themes. Rather, he was joining forces with those who would rebel against the limitations of the heroic couplet--a revolution in which he was one of the earliest participants and was later to become an important influence.

The use of blank verse had been urged by the very poet Philips imitated. In the note prefixed to Paradise Lost, Milton stated:

The measure is English Heroic Verse without Rime, as that of Homer in Greek, and of Virgil in Latin; Rime being no necessary adjunct or true Ornament of Poem or good Verse, in longer Works especially, but the Invention of a barbarous Age, to set off wretched matter and lame Meter. . . . This neglect then of Rime so little is to be taken for a defect, though it may seem so perhaps to vulgar Readers, that it rather is to be esteemed an example set, the first in English, of ancient liberty recover'd to Heroic Poem. . . .

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<sup>1</sup>John Milton, Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. Merrit Y. Hughes (New York, 1957), p. 210.

It was this manifestation of Milton's passion for ancient authority and poetic freedom that attracted much attention in the eighteenth century. Today blank verse is accepted as simply another verse form; but in Pope's day it was "a subject over which men waxed either dithyrambic or violent. No feature of the wildness and irregularity of Paradise Lost was so disturbing, pleasantly or otherwise, as its verse."<sup>2</sup>

... the movement towards freedom in verse found much the same advocates and opponents as that towards freedom in political and religious matters. It was the progressives or radicals against the conservatives: the one class, dissatisfied with the limitations of contemporary life and poetry, building largely upon theories and hopes, the other, entrenched behind the solid accomplishments of the present and the immediate past, finding literature and life passing comfortable as they were; the one stressing freedom, breadth, and imaginative suggestiveness as the essentials of poetry, the other emphasizing finish, elegance, and intellectual keenness. Yet these classes were by no means sharply defined or invariably antagonistic; for Gray and some others who admired Milton and agreed with the liberals on most points were opposed to blank verse, whereas many followers of Pope were friendly to it.<sup>3</sup>

Professor R. D. Havens, in his massively documented study on The Influence of Milton on English Poetry, enumerates over one thousand blank verse poems in the eighteenth century. As further evidence of the wide appearance and popularity of unrhymed poetry in a period dominated by the heroic couplet, he notes that "the poems most widely and enthusiastically read

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<sup>2</sup>R. D. Havens, The Influence of Milton on English Poetry (New York, 1961), p. 44.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 44-45.

were those in blank verse. Not until Scott and Byron swept the public off its feet did any rimed work of length gain a hold upon the people equal to that of The Seasons, Night Thoughts, The Grave, Pleasures of Imagination, and The Task. These, with Paradise Lost, were the poems most often read. . . ."<sup>4</sup> However, a majority of the influential literary figures of the age preferred rhymed poetry. Dr. Johnson wondered "When was blank verse without pedantry,"<sup>5</sup> and Robert Lloyd wrote in his Poetical Works:

Take it for granted, 'tis by those  
Milton's the model mostly chose,  
Who can't write verse and won't write prose.<sup>6</sup>

"Fastidious writers like Pope and Gray, antagonized by many of the slovenly and unmelodious imitations of Paradise Lost, naturally concluded, as Henry Neele did a hundred years later, that blank verse was another bow of Ulysses, 'an instrument which few know how to touch.'"<sup>7</sup> Yet, to blank verse as a poetic form, or when it was used by a skillful writer, they seemed to be well enough disposed. They "could hardly have been insensible to the argument contained in the oft-repeated reminder that Greek and Roman poetry was unrimed--another instance, it should be observed, of the way in which Milton's resemblances to classical writers gained him admirers."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Havens, p. 46.

<sup>5</sup>Johnson, Vol. II, p. 418.

<sup>6</sup>Cited in Loyd-Thomas, p. xxxi.

<sup>7</sup>Havens, p. 47.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 47-48.

Probably the greatest impetus to the popularization of blank verse was the very dominance of the heroic couplet itself: "Tyranny breeds revolt, and, as the years passed, more and more necks were galled by the yoke of the couplet. Even had there been no great unrimed poetry a reaction must inevitably have set in, but its advance was hastened, and made more conscious and intelligent, by the vogue of Paradise Lost."<sup>9</sup> A second impetus for the increasing acceptance of blank verse was the realization by a majority of writers that rhymed poetry was better adapted to some purposes, while the unrhymed variety was more suitable for others. John Armstrong, in Sketches, 1758, wrote: "In English Poetry I question whether it is possible, with any Success, to write Odes, Epistles, Elegies, Pastorals or Satires, without Rhime. . . ." W. H. Roberts, in the Preface to his "Judah Restored," 1774, wished to banish rhyme entirely from epic, dramatic, and didactic poetry. Blank verse eventually came to be the recognized medium for religious works and for many of the translations of the classics. It was also much used in meditative and philosophical poems, and, owing to the popularity of The Seasons, it became the usual vehicle for long works of natural description.

In this way rhyme came to be excluded to a great extent from long, serious poems, and tended to lose the admiration and respect of many readers. By the more ardent supporters

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<sup>9</sup>Havens, p. 48.

of blank verse it was regarded as a somewhat trivial and childish ornament suited only to light songs, satires, and occasional pieces. Rhyme "raises" such poems, said Edward Young, in "Conjectures on Original Composition," 1759, but "sinks the great; as spangles adorn children, but expose men." Hugh Blair, in his popular Lectures on Rhetoric, in 1760, agreed with those "who think that Rhyme finds its proper place in the middle, but not in the higher regions of Poetry." Even Dr. Johnson's dogmatic assertions as to the superiority of the couplet were always qualified by the clause "where it can be properly used."<sup>10</sup>

In the conclusion of his chapter on blank verse in The Influence of Milton on English Poetry, Havens discusses the results of the struggle between the two verse forms:

The quarrel between rime and blank verse was long, inconclusive, and apparently futile. Scarcely any of the eighteenth-century discussions of the subject have, for a modern reader, any value save the historical; and, as neither side triumphed or suffered defeat, though each had to give up certain untenable positions, the whole controversy might seem to have been to no purpose. Yet in reality it was profitable, for it was a campaign of education. Few may have been convinced by the arguments of their opponents, but the discussion was provocative of thought and in the end all were the wiser, for each side came to a better understanding not simply of the meter it opposed but of the one it favored. The greatest accomplishment was, indeed, a gradual clarifying of ideas in regard to prosody, a bringing to the consciousness of both readers and versifiers the existence of problems, difficulties, and possibilities that few had realized at the beginning of the century.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Johnson, p. 139.

<sup>11</sup>Havens, p. 53.

The role of John Philips in the popularization of eighteenth-century blank verse was one of considerable consequence. The first important aspect of this role was cited in Chapter III of this study: the numerous blank verse imitations, both direct and tangential, of his works, as well as the still greater number of poems that employed his tone, outlook, style, and themes. A second, no less important, aspect was his use of blank verse itself and the vehicle of Miltonic-imitation for his poetry. Only the Earl of Roscommon imitated Milton (and this briefly and poorly) before Philips; after his death there were dozens of poets and hundreds of poems employing Miltonic diction. The number of poems in blank verse following the death of Milton and prior to Philips's first work in 1701 was nine;<sup>12</sup> by the end of the century more than one thousand blank verse poems had been composed. Before the dawning of the eighteenth century Milton had been a relatively ignored poet: his popularity and influence were minor when compared to Shakespeare's, Jonson's, or Spenser's; by the time that century was completed, however, Milton was the most widely read as well as influential and imitated of all British poets. Between 1705 and 1800, Paradise Lost was published over one hundred times.<sup>13</sup> Spenser's Faerie Queen appeared only seven times in the same period, and there were fewer than fifty editions of Shakespeare.<sup>14</sup> It is true that many of the dramas

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<sup>12</sup>Havens, p. 46.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 47-48.



of Shakespeare appeared separately, but the most popular of these, Macbeth, was published by itself only thirteen times.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, Paradise Lost was the first English poem to appear in a critical edition, the first to have a variorum edition, the first to be sold by subscription, and the first to be made the subject of a detailed critical study.<sup>16</sup>

No one would suggest that this phenomenon--this movement to Milton and blank verse--was due solely or even in large part to John Philips. But his position in its vanguard is more than mere coincidence. The fact of some degree of influence would seem to be obvious: blank verse, before he wrote, was a relatively ignored verse form; after the publication and widespread imitation of his works, it became the most popular mode of poetic expression. Other things and other people, however, were at least as important as Philips in the growing acceptance of blank verse: the previously-mentioned revolt against the bonds of the heroic couplet; James Thomson's The Seasons; and the classicism and quality of Milton's poetry asserting itself. But these did not make Philips less significant. They combined with his works to fuel the new movement toward blank verse and poetic freedom.

The first poem in blank verse to appear after publication of Paradise Lost was the Earl of Roscommon's "Horace's Art of Poetry" in 1680. In the preface Roscommon noted that he chose unrhymed poetry "for the sake of liberty" and because his

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<sup>15</sup>Havens, p. 48.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

"chief care was to write intelligibly." Except for being in blank verse, the work contained only a few hints of the influence of Milton. Its rhythm and structure suggested little more than a long series of unrhymed heroic couplets. Walter Pope's "The Wish," 1697, and "Fables Done into Measured Prose," 1698, and Samuel Say's translations of four of Horace's epistles, in the same year, were the only other blank verse works of note prior to Philips.<sup>17</sup>

The popularity of Philips's poetry led to a widespread interest in Miltonic blank verse. Milton, however, was not always the direct model for the proliferating unrhymed poetry: many poets looked to Philips for inspiration in the "new" verse form. Professors Havens, De Maar, and Loyd-Thomas have noted extensive use of his techniques in the works of dozens of eighteenth-century writers, including Gay, Somerville, Cowper, and Thomas Warton. Loyd-Thomas even exhibits a number of borrowings by Pope, but they are limited to brief phrases. Probably the most important poet, in terms of blank verse excellence and general popularity, to be influenced by Philips was James Thomson. The Seasons was the most frequently printed and widely read poem in the eighteenth century.<sup>18</sup> That Thomson had a distinct preference for blank verse and was indebted to the author of Cyder is clear from "Autumn," the last of The Seasons to be written:

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<sup>17</sup>Havens, p. 86.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

Philips, Pomona's bard, the second thou  
 Who nobly durst, in rhyme-unfettered verse,  
 With British freedom sing the British song.

Professor Havens used this allusion to Philips to show the connection between Cyder and "Autumn":

This particular "British song" was, however, widely read, and in the eighteen years between its publication and the appearance of "Winter" would almost inevitably have come to the attention of one who cared for poetry of the kind. Furthermore, the similarities between the two works make it practically certain that there is some connection between them. Each discards rime, although at the time rime was the rule; each deals with homely country life; each owes much to Virgil's Georgics and to Paradise Lost; but, most of all, each makes use of the exaggerated, tumid Miltonisms which Philips had introduced into "The Splendid Shilling" for the sake of parody. The Seasons is more flowing than its predecessor and less stilted and bombastic; but the resemblances to Cyder are sufficiently marked to make it difficult to determine how much Thomson derived from Milton and how much from Philips. In his first two unrimed pieces, and in the few lines we have of an early draft of "Winter," the style is simpler and more direct and the language more natural than in The Seasons. This would indicate that Thomson deliberately stiffened his later verse; and, as he certainly knew Milton before writing any of these pieces but seems not to have been familiar with the "Splendid Shilling" when composing his juvenile burlesque, it appears likely that in making over the gorgeous Miltonic garment for work-a-day purposes he consciously followed Philips's practice. It may even be that he did not so much adapt this apparel himself as modify Philips's adaptation.<sup>19</sup>

In meter and diction John Philips anticipated Thomson by twenty years. Adaptations of a few passages of Cyder can be seen in the 1730 edition of "Winter." Philips had written:

. . . sturdy Swains  
 In clean Array, for rustic Dance prepare,

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<sup>19</sup>Havens, pp. 98-99.



More dismal than the loud dislodged Roar  
Of brazen Enginry. . . . .

. . . . .  
Meanwhile, the loosen'd winds,  
Infuriate, molten rocks and flaming globes  
Hurled high above the clouds; till, all their force  
Consum'd, her rav'nous jaws th' earth, satiate, clos'd.  
(Cyder, I, 187-194;  
231-234)

In "Bleinheim" Philips described a volley:

Now from each  
The brazen instruments of Death discharge  
Horrific flames, and turbid streaming clouds  
Of smoke sulphureous; intermixt with these  
Large globous irons fly, of dreadful hiss,  
Singeing the air, and from long Distance bring  
Surprising Slaughter. . . . .  
. . . . .  
. . . . .fragments of steel,  
And stones and glass, and nitrous grains adust;  
A thousand ways at once the shiver'd orbs  
Fly diverse, working torment, and foul rout.  
(Bleinheim, 143-149;  
155-158)

The influence of Philips on Thomson can be seen in the famous  
description of a drought and earthquake in "Summer":

Much yet remains unsung: the rage intense  
Of brazen-vaulted skies, of iron fields,  
Where drought and famine starve the blasted year;  
Fired by the torch of noon to tenfold rage,  
The infuriated hill that shoots the pillar'd flame;  
And, roused within the subterranean world,  
The expanding earthquake, that resistless shakes  
Aspiring cities from their solid base,  
And buries mountains of the flaming gulph.  
. . . . .  
Behold, slow-setting o'er the lurid grove,  
Unusual darkness broods; and growing gains,  
The full possession of the sky, surcharged  
With wrathful vapour, from the secret beds,  
Where sleep the mineral generations, drawn.  
Thence nitre, sulphur, and the fiery spume  
Of fatbitumen, steaming on the day,  
With various-tinctured trains of latent flame,  
Pollute the sky. . . . .  
(Summer, 1092-1100;  
1103-1111)

From the evidence presented in this chapter it can be

seen that John Philips was of some importance in the development of blank verse in the eighteenth century. His success in imitating the style of Milton and the popular reception of his works led many poets to a new appreciation of unrhymed poetry. Various modern scholars have traced the influence of Philips in the works of countless minor and a number of major writers of the period. The most important of the latter was James Thomson. Philips's position as the first Miltonian and his role in the popularization of blank verse in the eighteenth century make him a figure worthy of greater consideration than he is presently accorded.

## CHAPTER V

### PHILIPS AND GEORGIC POETRY

The literal meaning of the word "georgic" is "earth-work" or "field-work." In poetry a georgic is a poem that treats of work in the fields, of husbandry, or more broadly, of rural occupations and phenomena of nature. According to Addison,

The Georgic deals with rules of practice. A kind of poetry that addresses itself wholly to the imagination; it is altogether conversant among the fields and woods, and has the most delightful part of Nature for its province. It raises in our minds a pleasing variety of scenes and landscapes, while it teaches us, and makes the driest of its precepts look like a description. A Georgic therefore is some part of the science of husbandry, put into a pleasing dress, and set off with all the beauties and embellishments of poetry.<sup>1</sup>

When it is noted that the georgic treats of rural life, a relationship to the pastoral is immediately evident. Both have the same background, and shepherd life may be depicted in both. The element of delight in country life and peaceful country pursuits strongly colors each. The major difference between the georgic and the pastoral is one of purpose: the former aims to instruct, whereas the latter is

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<sup>1</sup>Joseph Addison, "An Essay on the Georgics," The Works of Joseph Addison, ed. E. L. Bohn (London, 1862), pp. 154-155.

intended primarily for pleasurable reading.

The georgic, as Vergil planned it, purports to instruct scientifically by means of technical terms and a use of practical details. The writer, speaking in the first person, recounts his experience for the reader's benefit, incidentally making use of various ornamental devices. The pastoral, as Theocritus and Vergil left the form, never assumes directly the purpose of instructing. It is most often dramatic in nature, and the characters are frequently represented as speaking, or singing, often in dialogue. The shepherd of Vergil's pastoral does not suggest the idea of toil. . . . He has his share of grievances, but his occupations are those wherein he may pass joyous and comparatively idle hours, in which, like Tityrus reclining under the shade of a spreading beech, he mediates the woodland muse on his slender reed.<sup>2</sup>

Virgil composed his Georgics between the years 37 and 30 B.C.<sup>3</sup> They consist of four books, each a complete poem, dealing, as the name implies, with a subject connected with agricultural pursuits. The first book treats of the preparation of the soil; the second of planting, grafting, and pruning; the third of the care and feeding of cattle; and the fourth gives instructions on the care of bees.

With respect to its conventional form, and as it developed in the eighteenth century, the georgic may be analyzed as follows<sup>4</sup>:

Subject matter:	A rural occupation.
Central theme:	The glorification of labor; the praise of simple country life in contrast with the troubled luxury of palaces.

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<sup>2</sup>Marie L. Lilly, The Georgic (Baltimore, Md., 1919), p. 20.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 24-25.



- Treatment:** Didactic, with precepts varied by digressions arising from the theme, or related to the subject matter.
- Chief features:** Formal opening, a statement of the subject: this followed by an invocation to the Muses or other guiding spirits.
- Address to the poet's patron.
- Panegyrics of great men.
- Mythological allusions.
- References to foreign lands, their products, climate, customs.
- Time marked by the position of the constellations.
- Proverbial sayings.
- Moralizations and philosophical reflections.
- Discussion of the Golden Age.
- Discussion of weather signs.
- Description of country pastimes.
- Descriptions of Nature.
- Love of peace; horror of war.
- A lament over present day evils, which are contrasted with the virtues and glories of the past.
- Rhapsody on the poet's native land.
- A long narrative episode,--in Vergil, the story of Aristaeus.

This conventional format was not always strictly adhered to, of course, but most of the early georgic poets attempted to follow Virgil as closely as possible. The first georgic in English to show definite Virgilian influence was "The

Silkwormes," 1599, by Thomas Moufat.<sup>5</sup> The poem is connected with the effort made for many years to introduce silk-craft into England and contains much information, some still valid, on the habits of the silk-worm.<sup>6</sup> The only other georgic poems prior to 1706 were John Denny's "Secrets of Angling," 1613, the anonymous "Innocent Epicure" (attributed to Tate), 1697, and John Whitney's "The Genteel Recreation," 1700.<sup>7</sup>

In 1706 there appeared

the poem which fixed the English georgic as a type and determined its form--John Philips' "Cyder." His choice of blank verse has a certain importance in English prosody, marking as it does the revival of non-dramatic blank verse as a popular poetic medium. If Philips had not been earlier interested in Miltonic blank verse, one would be tempted to account for its revival in the fact that the Miltonic line is the closest approximation in English poetry to the Vergilian. Milton's inversions, his periphrases; his artistry in matters of pause, alliteration, grouping of sounds, and adapting of sound to sense; and his Latinized vocabulary--all these made him the natural model for one who wished to adapt such a poem as the Georgics into English.<sup>8</sup>

Cyder is in two books and gives advice on the selection of a site for an orchard, proper soils, composts, irrigating trenches, planting, grafting, pruning, orchard pests, kinds of fruit, building of a mill, uses of the pulp, proper mixtures, and ageing of liquors in both wood and glass. To this

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<sup>5</sup>Dwight L. Durling, Georgic Tradition in English Poetry (New York, 1935), p. 33.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 33-34.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

Philips adds episodes, moral parallels, and descriptions of various places and things--in short, all the Virgilian accouterments.

In didactic passages, when possible, Philips "sticks close to Vergil's text, seeming to prefer the pedantic pleasure of ingeniously echoing Vergil in terms of English conditions."<sup>9</sup> The first didactic passage in Cyder provides an example of this method:

Who-e'er expects his lab'ring Trees shou'd bend  
 With Fruitage, and a kindly Harvest yield,  
 Be this his first Concern; to find a Tract  
 Impervious to the Winds, begirt with Hills,  
 That intercept the Hyperborean Blasts  
 Tempestuous, and cold Eurus nipping Force,  
 Noxious to feeble Buds: But to the West  
 Let him free Entrance grant, let Zephyrs bland  
 Administer their tepid genial Airs;  
 Naught fear he from the West, whose gentle Warmth  
 Discloses well the earth's all-teeming Womb,  
 Invigorating tender Seeds; whose Breath  
 Nurtures the Orange, and the Citron Groves,  
 Hesperian Fruits, and wafts their Odours sweet  
 Wide thro' the Air, and distant Shores perfumes.  
 Nor only do the Hills exclude the Winds:  
 But, when the blackning Clouds in sprinkling Show'rs  
 Distill, from the high Summits down the Rain  
 Runs trickling; with the fertile Moisture chear'd,  
 The Orchats smile; joyous the Farmers see  
 Their thriving Plants, and bless the heavnly Dew.  
 (Cyder, I, 20-40)

Like the Georgics, Cyder is written in the form of direct address, in an authoritarian, magisterial manner. Description is a subordinate element in the poem. Philips observes some of the harbingers of bad weather and gives brief descriptions of the seasons of the year, especially of the vibrantly changing colors of "that best season,"

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<sup>9</sup>Durling, p. 35.

autumn. He pictures the fall of the ancient city of Ariconium, destroyed by earthquake and volcano, and links it to various episodes of a moral sort. He briefly discusses the necessity of labor, the horrors of war, and the inferiority of the life of cities and courts in contrast with country life (a theme that was to become extremely popular in the eighteenth century). The usual georgic panegyric is little more than praise of Philips's own Hertfordshire. He begins by contrasting foreign wines with those of England, and then follows Virgil's plan in praising the vegetables, herds and flocks, metals, hills, fields, groves, and, finally, the "undaunted men" of his own land. As the Georgics describe life in Libya and Scythia, Philips has "excursions of fancy" to Ireland, Belgium, arctic and tropical regions, and America. A final parallel to Virgil is seen in his picture of the joys of peasants feasting and dancing in merry gatherings after periods of hard labor.

Professor Dwight L. Durling, in Georgic Tradition in English Poetry has called Cyder an

... ingenious pastiche, often closer to Vergil than the neo-Latin poets were. Philips' pleasure in composing it was partly that of a scholar delighting in ingeniously adapting the themes of an admired original into terms of native conditions. The pleasure he hoped to arouse in readers was partly in the recognition of this ingenuity. "Cyder" is often unreadable today for people who can only regard with wonder the high praise it once had. They do not look for this kind of minor merit lying in ingenuity of adaptation. With this poem really begins the adoption into English verse, as a borrowed form, of the classical didactic poem,

and the Anglicization of the Georgics.

Aside from Thomson's The Seasons, Cyder is probably the most influential work in English in the development of the georgic as an eighteenth-century poetic genre. Between Philips's death and the turn of the century there were some seventy<sup>11</sup> poems in the georgic tradition, many of them rhymed. Yet, "only those in the Miltonic measure were widely read. The first of the treatises to discard rime was Philips's Cyder (1708), which on account of its priority and its popularity throughout the century became, together with The Seasons, the model after which most works of the kind were patterned. Their exaggerated Miltonic style and diction, the introduction of episodes, the preference for subjects related to country life, all point to Philips and Thomson."<sup>12</sup>

The amount of influence wielded by Philips's poem is difficult to measure. M. L. Lilly, in The Georgic, notes that Cyder was "the first English poem of any importance in which a true georgic theme is treated in the manner and spirit of Vergil's Georgics. . . ." <sup>13</sup> She adds that

The influence of this didactic on English poetry of the eighteenth century was considerable. No one has ever suggested that it had any influence on French and Italian poetry. Perry, however, states that Cyder was much admired in Italy, and that it was translated into Italian. In 1749 . . . it was translated into French.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Havens, p. 360.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Lilly, p. 33.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 33-34.

Mill Lilly concludes that "to the influence of both Philips and Thomson the long list of eighteenth-century English imitations of the Georgics must be ascribed."<sup>15</sup>

Cyder was popular with eighteenth-century readers. Alone and in conjunction with "The Splendid Shilling" it reached fourteen editions by 1744.<sup>16</sup> It was respected by most of the major poets of the period (see Chapter I), and Dr. Johnson felt that it "need not shun the presence of the original." Gay's "Wine," 1708, is a direct imitation of Cyder, and in "Hobbinol," 1740, Somerville referred to

Silurian Cyder . . . by that great Bard  
Ennobled, who first taught my groveling Muse  
To mount Aerial. O! Cou'd I but raise  
My feeble Voice to his exalted Strains.

Professor Durling feels that Cyder "had shown Thomson how Milton's blank verse might be employed on georgic material, how Vergil's plan might be adapted, how his themes might be Anglicized."<sup>17</sup>

In their studies of georgic poetry and the "commercial epic," Professors Lilly, Durling, and Havens note the influence of Cyder on such works as Gay's "Rural Sports," 1713, "The Shepherd's Week," 1714, and "Trivia, or the Art of Walking the Streets of London" ("Georgic themes are clothed in delightful incongruity."<sup>18</sup>), 1715; Thomson's The Seasons, 1726-

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<sup>15</sup>Lilly, pp. 35-36.

<sup>16</sup>Havens, p. 99.

<sup>17</sup>Durling, p. 43.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 40.

1730; Somerville's The Chase ("I shall not be ashamed to follow the Example of Milton, Philips, Thomson"--from the Preface), 1735, and "Hobbinol"; Christopher Smart's 1752 work, "The Hop-Garden" (in which he refers, in the preface, to the "graceful ease," "art," and "fire" of Cyder). Instead of invoking the muses, he summons Philips to his aid:

Thou, O Hesiod! Virgil of our land,  
Or hear'st thou rather, Milton, bard divine,  
Whose greatness who shall imitate, save thee?);

Dodsley's "Agriculture," 1753; Dyer's "The Fleece," 1757; and Cowper's The Task, 1785. Dozens of other minor poems are listed as coming under the influence of Cyder.

Philips's importance as a georgic poet is exceeded by his significant role in the development of eighteenth-century blank verse and Miltonic burlesque. The amount or degree of influence of Cyder on succeeding georgic poems is a moot point at best. The important fact is that Philips wrote the first competent georgic in English. His skill in approximating the form and manner of Virgil led others to use the Georgics as the model for their poetry.

## CHAPTER VI

### JOHN PHILIPS: IMITATOR OF MILTONIC STYLE

One of the clearest statements of the eighteenth-century attitude toward originality is to be found in the *Spectator* of 20 December 1711, where Addison observes:

Wit and fine writing doth not consist so much in advancing things that are new, as in giving things that are known an agreeable turn. It is impossible for us, who live in the latter ages of the world, to make observations in criticism, morality, or in any art or science, which have not been touched upon by others. We have little else left us, but to represent the common sense of mankind in more strong, more beautiful, or more uncommon light.

The Augustan poets were conscious classicists who felt no shame in admitting that they were imitators. They were well versed in contemporary standards of literary excellence and were more interested in fidelity to a set model than in spontaneity. The eighteenth-century reader was aware that many second-rate writers were mere plagiarists, but there was no widespread feeling against imitation. So long as the poet repaid with something of his own, even direct borrowing was counted as an asset. Such acquisitions from the classics were thought to enhance any poet's work, as well as to show his erudition. John Smith, in his 1736 volume of Poems Upon Several Occasions, noted in the preface:



To avoid the imputation of a plagiarist, I have printed whatsoever I have taken from any writer as far as my memory could go back, in a distinct character. . . . Such fragments as these serve for a kind of inlay to the work, and afford a graceful variety.

From the above it is apparent that John Philips was indulging in no novel experiment when he decided to write a number of poems in imitation of one of the great poets of the English language. His choice of blank verse, however, did create something of a controversy. The custom of the age had been to take the style, ideas, and even whole passages from a classic work and convert them into couplets. The critics frowned upon any deviation from this pattern and were duly alarmed with Philips's uncompromising imitation of Miltonic blank verse.

John Philips imitated Milton with unsurpassed skill and thoroughness. Inverted word order, conversion of one part of speech into another, unusual compounds, appositions, parentheses, elision of words, Latinity, enumeration of exotic and archaic proper names, sensuous imagery--all the artful devices of Milton's poetry are mastered by Philips. The remainder of this chapter will consist of an investigation of the ingredients of Milton's Grand Style and the manner in which they are employed by Philips. The following features will be studied:

- I. Iambic Pentameter
- II. Run-on Line and Blank Verse Paragraph
- IIII. A. Suspension of Sense
- IV. Caesura

- V. Inversion of Accent
- VI. Feminine Endings
- VII. Elision
- VIII. Proper Names
  - A. "ean" and "ian" Words
- IX. Parenthesis
- X. Apposition
- XI. Words
  - A. Repetition of Words
  - B. Parallel Series
  - C. Abstract Words
  - D. Archaic Words
  - E. Words from Greek and Latin
  - F. Subject Words
- XII. Spelling
- XIII. Compound Epithets
- XIV. Latinisms
  - A. Inversion of Word Order
  - B. Epithet After Noun
  - C. Omission of Superfluous Words
- XV. Imagery of Sensation
- XVI. One Part of Speech for Another
- XVII. Similes

## I. Iambic Pentameter

A study of the stylistic similarities of two poets should begin with the most obvious points of correspondence and gradually work up to more subtle and complex considerations. In the poetry of John Milton and John Philips the use of iambic pentameter is the most conspicuous point of similarity.

In Paradise Lost (PL) and Paradise Regained (PR) the standard of Milton's verse is unrhymed iambic pentameter. This may be defined as a sequence of five alternate unstressed and stressed syllables. When poetry achieved this exact regularity in the eighteenth century, it concurred with the usual practice of Pope and won the approval of Johnson. But to apply such a rigid standard of iamb-counting to Milton's blank verse is to misunderstand the principle upon which he worked. He accepted the strict succession of iambics only as a norm; after he accustomed the ear to the alternate short and long syllables, he indulged in numerous variations, many of them anathema to such classicists as Dr. Johnson. With Milton the line and the couplet are not the accepted units: he prefers the majestic sweep and grandeur inherent in his "poetic phrase" or "blank verse paragraph." This device is not coincident with any single line or sequence of lines and makes scansion of his poetry difficult.

For purposes of investigation, however, scansion of single lines and strict counting of syllables are useful. Occasionally Milton will compose lines with an even and regular

iambic beat:

Torments him; round he throws his baleful eyes<sup>1</sup>  
(PL, I, 56)

To thee who hast thy dwelling here on Earth  
(PL, VIII, 118)

United thought and counsels, equal hope  
(PL, I, 88)

However such regular iambics are comparatively rare in Milton. Usually his unstressed-unstressed pattern is somewhat liberal and inexact. In the line

The force of those dire Arms? yet not for those  
(PL, I, 94)

the word "dire" is almost as important as "arms" and carries equal accent. Aside from the innumerable trochees and anapests and an occasional spondee, Milton has lines such as

Of that Forbidden Tree whose mortal tast  
(PL, I, 2)

where few readers would emphasize the second syllable much more than the succeeding ones.

In "The Splendid Shilling" (SS), "Bleinheim (Bl), Cy-der (Cy), and "Cerealia" (Cer), John Philips follows Milton in employing the unrhymed line of ten syllables and five accents in rising rhythm. His blank verse adheres to a somewhat more consistent iambic rhythm than that of Milton, possibly because he was unsure of his ability to experiment with or vary his metrics, or perhaps because he unconsciously labored in the wake of Dryden and the regularity of the

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<sup>1</sup>John Milton, Complete Poems and Major Prose, ed. Merrit Y. Hughes (New York, 1957), p. 213. Quotations hereafter cited will be from this edition.

heroic couplet. Whatever the reason, a majority of his lines are in almost strict iambic pentameter:

A Splendid Shilling: He nor hears with Pain<sup>2</sup>  
(SS, 3)

To Rook, that He should let that Monarch know  
(B1, 427)

Of English Tipple, and the potent Grain  
(Cer, I)

Would dread thy Praise, and shun the dubious Strife  
(Cy, I, 490)

Occasionally, however, Philips is less insistent upon exact iambs. In the line

Be it thy Choice, when Summer-Heats annoy  
(Cy, I, 49)

the first two words bear equal stress, while in

But that Great Anne, weighing th' Events of War  
(B1, 31)

the ictus may be varied freely. Philips frequently was excessive in his imitation of Milton's poetic idiosyncrasies, but in the matter of iambic consistency he was much more regular.

## II. Run-on Line and Blank Verse Paragraph

Milton's verse is not simply made up of five iambic feet as a standard from which he occasionally deviates in order to achieve certain effects. He composed, rather, in what variously has been termed "musical paragraphs," "poetic phrases," and "blank verse paragraphs." This is achieved

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<sup>2</sup>John Philips, The Poems of John Philips, ed. M. G. Loyd-Thomas (Oxford, 1927), p. 3. Quotations hereafter cited will be from this edition.

primarily through the classical use of the run-on line, or enjambement, which permits of thought-grouping in large or small blocks. Clauses which would ordinarily be subordinate gain a weight which gives them the effect of independent statements.

The blank verse paragraph so often mentioned in discussions of Milton's poetry is as much a matter of rhetoric as it is of verse. It is because the sense is suspended through line after line, and because Milton takes pains to avoid coincidence of the rhetorical pause with the line end that we have the continuity of rhythm which is so characteristic a feature of his blank verse.<sup>3</sup>

The following lines from Paradise Lost provide an example of the enjambement of Milton's verse paragraphs:

The happier state  
 In Heav'n, which follows dignity, might draw  
 Envy from each inferior; but who here  
 Will envy whom the highest place exposes  
 Foremost to stand against the Thunderer's aim  
 Your bulwark, and condemns to greatest share  
 Of endless pain? where there is then no good  
 For which to strive, no strife can grow up there  
 From Faction; for none sure will claim in Hell  
 Precedence, none, whose portion is so small  
 Of present pain, that with ambitious mind  
 Will covet more.

(PL, II, 24-35)

#### A. Suspension of Sense

A poetic device much used by Milton is the suspension of sense or meaning from one line to the next. He avoids the heroic couplet (which is usually a complete thought, statement, or sentence in two lines) and fills his lines with insertions of less important elements which delay the

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<sup>3</sup>J. H. Hanford, A Milton Handbook (New York, 1946), p. 29.

completion of the sense. Suspension of the meaning is one of the important structural components of the blank verse paragraphs. The opening lines of *Paradise Lost* furnish an excellent example of sense suspension:

Of Man's First Disobedience, and the Fruit  
Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal tast  
Brought Death into the World, and all our woe,  
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man  
Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat,  
Sing, Heav'nly Muse.

(PL, I, 1-6)

The run-on line and the blank verse paragraph are two of Philips's most successful imitations of the Miltonic style. Much of the early eighteenth-century blank verse was little more than unrhymed couplets or elevated prose cut into ten-foot lengths.<sup>4</sup> Freer prosody was unquestionably preferred by many poets, but the end-stopped line and medial caesura were too deeply entrenched in the prosodic theory of the time to be easily discarded. Even the blank verse of Thomson's *The Seasons*, according to Professor Beers, ". . . has been passed through the strainer of the heroic couplet."<sup>5</sup> Philips, however, was able to master completely the art of enjambement:

Learn now, the Promise of the coming Year  
To know, that by no flattering Signs abus'd,  
Thou wisely may'st provide: The various Moon  
Prophetic, and attendant Stars explain  
Each rising Dawn; e'er Icy Crusts surmount

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<sup>4</sup>Havens, p. 55.

<sup>5</sup>H. A. Beers, *A History of English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1899), p. 111.

The current Stream, the heav'nly Orbs serene  
 Twinkle with trembling Rays, and Cynthia glows  
 With Light unsully'd: Now the Fowler, warn'd  
 By these good Omens, with swift early Steps  
 Treads the crimp Earth, ranging thro' Fields and Glades  
 Offensive to the Birds, sulphureous Death  
 Checques their mid Flight, and, heedless while they strain  
 Their tuneful Throats, the tow'ring, heavy Lead  
 O'er-takes their Speed; they leave their little Lives  
 Above the Clouds, praecipitant to Earth.

(Cy, II, 162-176)

His command of the verse paragraph and suspension of sense can be seen in a passage from "The Splendid Shilling":

So pass my Days. But when Nocturnal Shades  
 This World envelop, and th' inclement Air  
 Persuades Men to repel benumbing Frosts  
 With pleasant Wines, and crackling blaze of Wood,  
 Me Lonely sitting, nor the glimmering Light  
 Of Make-weight Candle, nor the joyous Talk  
 Of loving Friend delights; distress'd, forlorn,  
 Amidst the horrors of the tedious Night,  
 Darkling I sigh, and feed with dismal Thoughts  
 My anxious Mind; or sometimes mournful Verse  
 Indite, and sing of Groves and Myrtle Shades,  
 Or desperate Lady near a purling Stream,  
 Or Lover pendent on a Willow-Tree.

(SS, 93-105)

Statistically, Philips exceeded Milton in the use of enjambement. The percentage of run-on lines in Paradise Lost is fifty-eight and in Paradise Regained it is forty-five.<sup>6</sup> The percentages for Philips are: "Bleinheim," sixty-five per cent (321 cases of enjambement out of 493 total lines); Cy-der, sixty-one (898 out of 1,465 lines); "The Splendid Shilling," forty-nine (70 of 143); and "Cerealia," forty-eight (100 of 207). Philips and Thomas Newcomb (in "The Last Judgment of Men and Angels, A Poem in Twelve Books, after the Manner of Milton," 1723) are the only eighteenth-century poets

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<sup>6</sup>Hanford, p. 295.



who exceeded Paradise Lost in having more run-on lines and fewer end-stopped lines. (Even Shelley and Swinburne, in the nineteenth century, have more end-stopped lines than Paradise Lost.<sup>7</sup>) Shenstone, Watts, Cowper, Somervile, Akenside, Newcomb, and Philips have more run-on lines than Paradise Regained. Glover, Mallet, Thomson, Blair, and Young have fewer. The lowest point is touched by Thomas Young, whose percentage of run-on lines is only twenty-five. Here the influence of the heroic couplet is unmistakable; indeed, Young used more end-stopped lines in his blank verse than Pope did in his couplets.<sup>8</sup>

#### IV. Caesura

Milton's use of the caesura, or strong pause, has often been cited as an example of his poetic individualism and his preference for brief clauses and concentrated verse. He varies the caesura more extensively than any other poet, places it at any point in a given line, and makes use of the multiple pause. Robert Bridges, in Milton's Prosody, feels that caesura, because of its classical preciseness, is not the correct term for the pause in blank verse:

. . . since blank verse is a system of short sentences of all possible variety of length, fitted within the frame of a five-foot metre, the tendency of the break towards the middle part of the verse is easily lost; and when the verse is handled in a masterly manner the break may occur well in any part of the line. It is necessary, therefore, to discard the word caesura, with its precise signification, and call this division in

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<sup>7</sup>De Maar, p. 141.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 141-142.

blank verse "the break."<sup>9</sup>

Regardless of what it is called, Milton systematically varies the position of the pause in his lines. In the whole of Paradise Lost Professor J. W. Mackail could find less than twenty-five instances of the pause coming at the same point in the line for more than two lines consecutively.<sup>10</sup> A random sampling of lines from Milton's most famous work will show that the caesura can be found after any of the ten syllabic units:

Day, // or the sweet approach of Ev'n or Morn  
(PL, III, 42)

Sings darkling, // and in shadiest Covert hid  
(PL, III, 39)

Harmonious numbers; // as the wakeful Bird  
(PL, III, 38)

Of Man's First Disobedience, // and the Fruit  
(PL, I, 1)

Joyn voices all ye living Souls, // ye Birds  
(PL, V, 197)

Frequently there are two or more breaks in a Miltonic line:

Regions of sorrow, // doleful shades, // where peace  
(PL, III, 10)

Hail Son of God, // Saviour of Men, // thy Name  
(PL, III, 412)

Instruct me, // for thou know'st; // Thou from the first  
(PL, I, 19)

Rough, // or smooth rin'd, // or bearded husk, // or shell  
(PL, VI, 207)

And swims or sinks, // or wades, // or creeps, // or flies  
(PL, II, 950)

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<sup>9</sup>Robert Bridges, Milton's Prosody (Oxford, 1921), p. 43.

<sup>10</sup>J. W. Mackail, The Springs of Helicon (London, 1909), pp. 182-183.

Philips closely parallels Milton in the varied placing of the break. The caesura may fall at any point in the line:

See, // with what Outrage from the frosty North  
(Bl, 405)

Her drowsie Wings, // and follows to the War  
(Cer, 96)

Noxious to planted Fields, // and often Men  
(Cy, I, 139)

With hideous accent thrice he calls; // I know  
(SS, 40)

Philips also employs the multiple pause:

What should I do? // or whither turn? // Amazed  
(SS, 42)

The mite, // invisible else, // of Nature's Hand  
(Cy, I, 346)

Your easie March? // Advance; // we'll bridge a Way  
(Bl, 113)

Uneasie, // tedious Days, // despis'd, // forlorn  
(Cy, I, 684)

#### V. Inversion of Accent

Blank verse is usually in rising rhythm--that is, the metrical accent is regularly on the even syllables. For the sake of variety a poet will sometimes invert the accent by shifting the stress to the odd syllable in any place in the line. Milton freely varies the iambic succession of unaccented-accented syllables in his poetry. Inversion in Paradise Lost is most common in the first foot, next in the third and fourth, very rare in the second, and most infrequent in the fifth foot.<sup>11</sup> He substitutes trochees at will, employs the

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<sup>11</sup>Bridges, p. 40.

anapest whenever he desires a swifter and lighter foot, and frequently achieves the difficult spondee. Below is an example of inversion of the first foot:

Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace  
(PL, I, 65);

of the second:

To the Garden of Bliss, thy seat prepar'd  
(PL, VIII, 299);

of the third:

For one restraint, Lords of the World besides?  
(PL, I, 32);

the fourth:

Illumine, what is low raise and support  
(PL, I, 23);

and the fifth:

Beyond all past example and future  
(PL, X, 840)

Philips employs accentual inversion freely in his poetry, most commonly in the first foot:

Useless resistance make. With eager strides  
(SS, 88)

Therefore Thee first, and last, the Muse shall sing  
(B1, 12)

Wrought by Intemperance, joint-racking Gout  
(Cy, II, 472)

This is the easiest and most normal variation of the iambic pattern and is common even with the couplet versifiers of the eighteenth century. Like Milton, however, Philips does not limit his poetic inversion to the first foot:

The crowding waves gush with impetuous rage  
(SS, 137)

More happy they, b<sup>o</sup>rn in Columbus' World  
(Cy, II, 265)

The Muses Sang a<sup>l</sup>ternate, all Carows'd  
(Cer, 206)

With copious Fuel; whence the st<sup>u</sup>rdy Oak  
(Cy, I, 574)

Philips makes infrequent use of double inversion:

Weighing the Sum of Things, with wise Fore<sup>o</sup>cast  
(Cy, I, 655)

Horrible Monster! Hated by Gods and Men  
(SS, 37)

Her Throne inviolate. Hear ye Gods, this Vow  
(Cy, I, 629)

#### VI. Feminine Endings

Milton occasionally varies his meter by admitting more than the standard ten syllables to a line. With few exceptions these extra-metrical syllables are of the weak or feminine variety. In "Feminine Endings in Milton's Blank Verse," J. C. Smith finds 93 such endings in Paradise Lost, of which 41 occur in Book X.<sup>12</sup> Masson, in the preface to his edition of Milton's poems, agrees that roughly one percent of the lines in Paradise Lost have feminine endings, but counts at least 52 in Book X.<sup>13</sup> Ants Oras's complex study of weak endings in Milton finds 147 in Paradise Lost (53 of them in Book X), 91 in Paradise Regained, and 242 in Samson Agonistes. (The

<sup>12</sup>J. C. Smith, "Feminine Endings in Milton's Blank Verse," T.L.S., Dec. 5, 1916, p. 1016.

<sup>13</sup>D. Masson, The Works of John Milton (London, 1882), Vol. III, pp. 224-225.

<sup>14</sup>Ants Oras, "Milton's Blank Verse," SAMLA Studies in Milton, ed. J. Patrick (Gainesville, Florida, 1961), p. 161.

lack of agreement among these authors may be accounted for by the many words which are capable of monosyllabic or near-monosyllabic pronunciation, as well as by different methods of scansion.) Some examples of Milton's use of the weak or feminine ending:

That durst dislike his reign, and me preferring  
(PL, I, 102)

And high disdain, from sence of injur'd merit  
(PL, I, 98)

Will envy whom the highest place exposes  
(PL, II, 27)

The percentage of feminine endings in the works of Philips is somewhat less than the one percent of Paradise Lost. Here, again, the influence of the heroic couplet is obvious: the extra-metrical syllable at the end of a line was considered jarring and unmusical; the early eighteenth-century poets saw it as a lack of ability to compose consistent iambs, rather than a refreshing device for variation as intended by Milton. In spite of the prosodic theory of the day, Philips occasionally employs the feminine ending:

With high Ambition, and conceit of Prowess  
(Bl, 96)

His Victims, Youths, and Virgins, in their Flower  
(Cy, I, 156)

What stars their black, disastrous Influence shed  
(Cy, II, 509)

Whether or not the word "Flower," in the second example above, constitutes a weak ending is a moot point. It could be maintained that near-monosyllabic words such as "hour," "scour," and "lour" are always pronounced as such and cannot be

divided as feminine endings. Also included would be such words as "bower," "shower," and "flower." The latter group, however, would seem to be more obviously capable of polysyllabic pronunciation than the former. If Philips intended the word "flower" to be read as one syllable, he probably would have elided the "e" as he does in

But, when the blackning Clouds in sprinkling Show'rs  
(Cy, II, 533)

and

Ambrosial Fragrance Flew: the signal giv'n,  
(Cer, 202)

Without such elisions the words would almost surely constitute feminine endings. And, just as obviously, Philips would have elided "flower" if he had not desired that it be read as two syllables. Such elided usages as "giv'n" and "show'rs" are frequent as end words in the poetry of Philips and were conventional in the verse of the period. They lower the percentage of feminine endings considerably.

## VII. Elision

Elision is the omission of a part of a word for ease of pronunciation, for euphony, or to secure a desired rhythmic effect. It is usually accomplished by the exclusion of a final vowel preceding an initial vowel, as "th' orient" for "the orient." However, elision also occurs between syllables of a single word, as "ne'er" for "never." Milton elided extensively in his poetry, but his contractions can be brought under certain set rules or practices. These rules (omitting

the elisions and contractions of common speech) were formulated by Robert Bridges in his work on Milton's Prosody under the following heads:

a) Open vowels: Any vowel except "a" as in "father" and "aw" as in "law" may elide with any following vowel, in the same word or in the next word, even when separated by punctuation:

Above the Aonian Mount while it pursues  
(PL, I, 15)

Strange horror seise thee and pangs unfelt before  
(PL, II, 703)

For God is also in sleep and Dreams advise  
(PL, XII, 611)

The same is true when the vowels are separated by "h" or "wh":

For still they knew, and ought to have still remember'd  
(PL, X, 12)

Two onely who yet by sov'ran gift possess  
(PL, V, 366)

b) Vowels separated by the liquids "l," "n," and "r":

Two unstressed vowels separated by "l," "n," and "r" may suffer elision, with the two vowels counting as one and with syllabic loss of the first. This may occur within a word or between words:

As one who long in populous City pent  
(PL, IX, 445)

Not distant far from thence a murmuring sound  
(PL, IV, 453)

Of unoriginal Night and Chaos wilde  
(PL, X, 477)

c) Words regularly treated as monosyllables, and contractions. These include "heaven," "power," "spirit," and



comparable words like "seven" and "even," and "flower" and "hour." The word "Capitol" becomes "Cap'tol" in Books II (924), XI (343), and XII (383) of Paradise Lost.<sup>15</sup>

d) Milton also contracts such past participles in "en" as "fallen" (it becomes "fall'n"), and in "ed" as "called" (it becomes "call'd"), and the second person of verbs, like "thinkst" and "remembrest." Finally, he uses "o'er" for "over," "e'er" for "ever," and twice writes "ith'" for "in the."<sup>16</sup>

Philips also employs elision extensively to achieve certain desired rhythmic effects. The following examples will show how closely he imitates Miltonic contractions:

Entrench'd with many a Frown, and Conic Beard  
(SS, 49)

Lasht furious; they in sullen Majesty  
(B1, 19)

But that Great Anne, weighing the Events of War  
(B1, 31)

When Thee She enroll'd Her Garter'd Knights among  
(B1, 74)

Shall weild th' Hesperian, Who the Polish Sword  
(B1, 462)

Shearing the Expanse of Heav'n with active Plume  
(Cer, 27)

Employ'd my various Art to enrich the Lap  
(Cer, 69)

E'er he the Embattail'd Pylians led, to Quell  
(Cer, 174)

To be styl'd Honourable: The Honest Man  
(Cy, I, 730)

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<sup>15</sup>William B. Hunter, Jr., "The Sources of Milton's Prosody," P.Q., XXVIII (1949), 126.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

Chews verdurous Pasture; nor the yellow Fields  
(Cy, I, 567)

And toss, and turn, and curse the unwholsome Draught  
(Cy, I, 59)

### VIII. Proper Names

Milton's poetry is filled with collections of unusual and sometimes exotic proper names. Into comparatively short passages he introduces many names that are not always necessary to the sense, but which add richness, color, imaginative suggestiveness, remoteness, and voluptuousness. Such qualities are indispensable for the successful treatment of his magnificent themes.

Of Cambalu, seat of Cathaian Can  
And Samarchand by Oxus, Temirs throne,  
To Paquin of Sinaean Kings, and thence  
To Agra and Lahor of great Mogul. . . .  
(PL, XI, 388-391)

And what resounds  
In fable or romance of Uther's son,  
Begirt with British and Armoric Knights;  
And all who since, baptized or infidel,  
Jousted in Aspramont, or Montalban,  
Damasco, or Marocco, or Trebisonde;  
Or whom Biserta sent from Afric shore  
When Charlemain with all his peerage fell  
By Fontarabbia.  
(PL, I, 579-587)

Though Philips's themes are more pedestrian than those of Milton, he incorporates the stylistic device of innumerable proper names. This contrivance, aside from its obvious imitative intent, serves to elevate the serious works ("Bleinchheim" and Cyder) and to make more humorous the burlesques ("The Splendid Shilling" and "Cerealia"):

Or at the ancient town  
 Yclept Brechinia, or where Vaga's stream  
 Encircles Ariconium, fruitful soil,  
 Whence flow nectareous wines, that well may vie  
 With Massic, Setin, or renowned Falern.

(SS, 29-33)

Such is the Kentchurch, such Dantzeyan Ground,  
 Such thine, O learned Brome, and Capel such,  
 Wilisian Burlton, much-lov'd Geers his Marsh,  
 And Sutton-Acres, drench'd with Regal Blood  
 Of Ethelbert, when to th' unhallow'd Feast  
 Of Mercian Offa he invited came,  
 To treat of Spousals. . . .

(Cy, I, 67-73)

#### A. "ean" and "ian" Words

A poetic feature favored by Milton is the employment of adjectives in "ean" or "ian" from proper nouns. Some examples are "Ammonian," "Plutonian," "Cronian," "Thyestean," "Memphian," "Dictaeon," "Bactrian," "Cerberian," "Atlantean," "Ausonian," "Memnonian," and "Philistean."

Philips goes to extremes in imitating this Miltonic characteristic, producing literally hundreds of "ean" and "ian" adjectives in his poetry:

Upon a Cargo of fam'd Cestrian Cheese  
 (SS, 27)

To vend his Wares, or at th' Arvonian Mart  
 (SS, 29)

Of Boreas, that congeals the Cronian Waves  
 (SS, 127)

The Lilybean Shoar, with hideous Crush  
 (SS, 132)

Bands, numerous as the Memphian Soldiery  
 That swell'd the Erythraean Wave, when Wall'd  
 (B1, 232-233)

Torment the Boian Prince? From Native Soil  
(Bl, 341)

The Solymaean Sultan, he o'erthrew  
(Bl, 351)

Down to the Lusitanian Vales, resolv'd  
(Bl, 391)

To Mauritania, or the Bactrian Coasts  
(Bl, 470)

#### IX. Parenthesis

A device employed by Milton to achieve condensed expression is the placement of lines and phrases in parentheses:

The neighbouring moon  
(So call that opposite fair star)  
(Pl, IV, 321-322)

Their song was partial, but the harmony  
(What could it less when Spirits immortal sing?)  
Suspended Hell, and took with ravishment  
The thronging audience. In discourse more sweet  
(For eloquence the soul, song charms the sense)  
Others apart sat on a hill retired.  
(PL, II, 552-557)

The use of parenthesis in the works of Philips is often not so much for condensation as for authorial asides:

The Winter's fury and encroaching frosts,  
By time subdued (what will not time subdue!)  
(SS, 123-124)

With scanty offals, and small acid tiff  
(Wretched repast!) my meagre corpse sustain  
(SS, 15-16)

Usually, however, Philips employs the parenthetical device in the same fashion as Milton, i. e., as a method of elucidating upon a point in the most compact manner:

With oft retorted Eye  
They view the Gaping Walls, and Poor Remains

Of Mansions, once their own (now loathsome Haunts  
Of Birds obscene), bewailing loud the Loss  
Of Spouse, or Sire, or Son. . . .

(B1, 370-374)

The Prudent will observe, what Passions reign  
In various Plants (for not to Man alone,  
But all the wide Creation, Nature gave  
Love, and Aversion): Everlasting Hate  
The Vine to Ivy bears, nor less abhors  
The Coleworts Rankness. . . .

(Cy, I, 248-253)

#### X. Apposition

Milton frequently employs apposition in the same manner as parenthesis, i. e., to achieve condensed expression and to make certain ideas more lucid. The appositional clause is usually more directly related to the subject at hand--in that it serves to throw more light upon the topic--than the parenthetical clause. Examples of apposition in Paradise Lost are:

Of Abbana and Pharphar, lucid streams

(PL, I, 469)

Thus saying, from her side the fatal key,  
Sad instrument of all our woe, she took

(PL, II, 871-872)

Where eldest Night  
And Chaos, ancestors of Nature, hold

(PL, II, 894-895)

Elucidation of the matter under consideration and concise expression are likewise the purposes of John Philips's use of apposition:

With Looks demure, and silent Pace, a Dunn,  
Horrible Monster! hated by Gods and Men,  
To my aerial Citadel ascends

(SS, 36-38)

Of angry Gods, . . . the Thunder, Voice  
 that rattled solemn. . . .  
 (Cy, I, 206-207)

Perform'd to Thor, and Woden, fabled Gods,  
 . . . and humble Rites  
 (Cy, I, 214-215)

On Scylla or Charybdis, dangerous Rocks,  
 She strikes rebounding. . . .  
 (SS, 134-135)

## XI. Words

### A. Repetition of Words

A Miltonic characteristic frequently discussed by critics is his intentional repetition of a word or a phrase:

. . . And feel by turns the bitter change  
 Of fierce extremes, extremes by change more fierce  
 (PL, II, 598-599)

So he with difficulty and labour hard  
 Moved on: with difficulty and labour he  
 (PL, II, 1021-1022)

The device is sometimes used to satisfy his predilection for punning:

At one slight bound high overleap'd all bound  
 (PL, IV, 181)

. . . the empyreal host  
 Of Angels, by imperial summons call'd  
 (PL, V, 583-584)

Vain-glorious. . . . . . . . . to glory aspires  
 (PL, VI, 383-384)

Philips also intentionally repeats words and phrases on numerous occasions:

The Britons come, with Gold well fraught they come  
 (Bl, 91)



abstract rather than concrete words in the relation of events in Heaven and Hell. In such descriptions Milton

does not prompt the imagination by selected detail to realize an individual figure or scene; he concentrates rather on the general impression itself. The reason is that the figures and scenes in these parts of the poem are themselves of representative rather than of singular interest; to individualize them would be to destroy the effect aimed at.<sup>17</sup>

In the following passage we see that most of the key words are general or abstract nouns:

In courts and Palaces he also Reigns  
And in luxurious cities, where the noise  
Of riot ascends above thir loftiest Towrs  
And injury and outrage: And when Night  
Darkens the Streets, then wander forth the Sons  
of Belial, flown with insolence and wine.  
(PL, I, 497-502)

The same method is used in the description of persons as of scenes, as exemplified in this characterization of Beelzebub:

. . . deep on his Front engraven  
Deliberation sat and public care  
And Princely counsel in his face yet shon,  
Majestic though in ruin. . . .  
(PL, I, 302-305)

Philips employs abstract words to give his verse an elevated tone. In "Bleinheim" and "Cyder" such words serve to raise serious themes to even higher planes:

Thus the Experienc'd Valour of One Man,  
Mighty in Conflict, rescu'd harrast Pow'rs  
From Ruin impendent, and th' afflicted Throne  
Imperial, that once Lorded o'er the World  
Sustain'd.  
(Bl, 272-276)

Nor let thy Avarice tempt thee to withdraw  
The Priest's appointed Share; with cheerful Heart

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<sup>17</sup>B. A. Wright, Milton's Paradise Lost (New York, 19-57), p. 66.



The tenth of thy Increase bestow, and own  
 Heav'n's bounteous Goodness, that will sure repay  
 Thy grateful Duty. . . .

(Cy, II, 146-150)

Philips is able to elevate even the ludicrous themes of "The Splendid Shilling" and "Cerealia" by making many of his key words abstract rather than concrete:

. . . distressed, forlorn,  
 Amidst the horrors of the tedious Night,  
 Darkling I sigh, and feed with dismal Thoughts  
 My anxious Mind.

(SS, 99-102)

Her Golden Trump the Goddess sounded thrice,  
 Whose shrilling Clang reach'd Heav'n's extremest Sphear.  
 Rouz'd at the Blast, the Gods with winged speed  
 To learn the Tidings came, on radiant Thrones  
 With fair Memorials, and Impresses quaint  
 Emblazon'd o'er they sate, deviz'd of old  
 By Mulciber, nor small his Skill I ween.

(Cer, 35-41)

#### D. Archaic Words

Milton's vocabulary is not extensive. In his verse it embraces only about eight thousand words, or approximately half the number used by Shakespeare.<sup>18</sup> The poetic diction of Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained reflects his education: it is permeated with the vocabulary of Rome and Greece and the English Bible, and shows the influence of Italian writers such as Tasso and Elizabethan Romanticists such as Spenser, Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Ben Jonson.<sup>19</sup>

In his poetry Milton made frequent use of uncommon or unusual words

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<sup>18</sup>De Maar, p. 39.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 39-40.

to describe the exceptional persons and places with which he dealt; for ordinary language is not only inadequate but too definite and too connotative of commonplace things to picture archangels, chaos, hell, and heaven. These persons and places Milton with great art suggests to us through the atmosphere and sound of the poem, and in order to create this sound he had to depart from the ordinary vocabulary. For these reasons his diction would be marked in any age; but in the time of Pope and Johnson, when the poetic vocabulary was unusually limited and when many old words that are common today were obsolete, it must have seemed strange enough.<sup>20</sup>

The effect of Milton's use of exotic words is to give his poetry an aura of splendor, as well as a certain strangeness or aloofness. Perhaps the most noticeable aspect of his unusual vocabulary is the employment of archaic words found in Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakespeare. In the first three books of Paradise Lost the reader will stumble upon such usages as "grunsel," "welkin," "erst," "frore," "ken," "areed," "avaunt," "behests," "wons," and "emprise."

John Philips liberally sprinkles his poetry with archaic words. This is done for two reasons: first, he is continuing his close imitation of the Miltonic style; secondly, he is attempting to give his verses something of the remoteness and grandeur of Paradise Lost. In this effort Philips does not differentiate between the burlesque poems and the more serious Cyder and "Bleinheim." Part of the effectiveness of the parody inherent in "The Splendid Shilling" is the achievement of the grand tone of Milton's famous epic.

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<sup>20</sup>Havens, p. 183.

Following are a few of the many archaisms (mostly Spenserian) in the works of Philips, with the meanings and linguistic parentage noted parenthetically: "yclept" (called, named; Old English); "erst" (at first, formerly; Old English); "ken" (to make known, to teach; Old English; in 1567 the word became vagabonds' slang for a house, especially one where thieves, beggars, or disreputable characters meet or lodge); "oft" (often; Old English); "whilom" (formerly, of old; Old English); "ye" (you; Old English); "perdue" (sentinel; Old French); "Frore" (frozen; Old English); "dulcet" (sweet; Old French); "meed" (reward; Old English); "welkin" (the arch of heaven overhead; Old English); "glebe" (soil, land; Old English); "architrove" (collective name for the parts that surround a window or doorway; Old French); "skinker" (one who pours drinks; Middle English). Along with dozens of such words, Philips employs the antiquated spellings of Chaucer, Spenser, and Shakespeare when possible.

#### E. Words from Greek and Latin

Another distinguishing characteristic of Milton's vocabulary is his extensive use of words from the Greek or Latin. Examples are "dulcet," "panoplie," "sapience," "nocent," "congratulant," "attrite," "insanguin'd," "sequent," "effulgent," "innocuous," and "empurpled." A complete list would include thousands of such words.

Philips is similarly indebted to the Greek and Latin for

most of his uncommon words. He uses "innocuous," "constrigent," "sublimed," "convolution," "infracted," "vernant," "diffusive," "nectareous," "turbant," "ebullient," "vitreous," "meliorate," "lubricity," and "confutation." A number of such words are the same ones used by Milton, but Philips parodies the author of Paradise Lost by applying the principle independently. It would appear that he occasionally uses big words as a show of erudition.

#### F. Subject Words

One of the obvious features of the vocabulary of Paradise Lost is the number of special words suggested or demanded by the subject. Just as a poem on nature demands words descriptive of woods, animals, mountains, and valleys, so too does Milton's work require terms and phrases relating to God, man, heaven, and hell. In Paradise Lost Milton has "ambrosial" 13 times, "chaos" 25, "adamant" or "adamantine" 11, "ethereal" 25, "void" 15, "abyss" 19, and "embattled" 5.<sup>21</sup> Josephine Miles, in her statistical study of poetic vocabularies in Major Adjectives in English Poetry, notes that Milton's six favorite adjectives are "good," "high," "fair," "bad," "happy," and "sweet." These, too, are words demanded by the subject.

Although the subject matter of his poetry is rarely similar to that of Paradise Lost, Philips uses words and phrases that are seen time and again in Milton's verses: "abyss," "horrors," "overwhelming," "disastrous acts," "mortal," "bad,"

"happy," "righteous," "unhallowed," "fair," "chasm," "solemn," "everlasting foe," "afflictions great," "towering," "citadel," "thundering," "sweet," "ascends," "good," "aerial," "tumultuous," "triumphant," "heart," "base," "regions," and "fate." All of these words were taken from one poem by Philips--"The Splendid Shilling." They are just as numerous in the other works, making it apparent that he was parodying as well as imitating Milton's elevated style.

#### G. Technical Words

Another characteristic of Milton's poetic language is the use of technical terms that involve a knowledge of most of the arts and sciences with which an educated man was then expected to be familiar. Included are words related to metallurgy, biology, mineralogy, astronomy, war, sailing, music, and architecture. An example of his use of such terms is provided by the passage describing how the devils, under Mammon's direction, perform three different industrial operations in mining the metal for the building of Pandaemonium:

There stood a Hill not far whose grisely top  
 Belch'd fire and rowling smoak; the rest entire  
 Shon with a glossie scurff, undoubted sign  
 That in his womb was hid metallic Ore,  
 The work of Sulphur. . . . Soon had his crew  
 Op'nd into the Hill a spacious wound  
 And dig'd out ribs of Gold. . . .  
 Nigh on the Plain in many cells prepar'd  
 That underneath had veins of liquid fire  
 Sluc'd from the Lake, a second multitude  
 With wondrous Art found out the massie Ore,  
 Severing each kind, and scum'd the Bullion dross:  
 A third as soon had form'd within the ground  
 A various mould, and from the boyling cells  
 By strange conveyance fill'd each hollow nook.

(PL, I, 670-707)

Philips does not discuss as many technical subjects in his poetry as Milton, but this is due primarily to the differing possibilities inherent in an epic such as Paradise Lost and a work on a more limited scale such as Cyder. For Milton the subject possibilities are virtually unlimited, whereas for Philips a relatively narrow range of topics is available--especially in view of the fact that in imitating Virgil's Georgics he must follow a set pattern. In spite of such limitations, Philips is something of a virtuoso. He speculates on the causes of earthquakes and volcanos, the secrets of nature's processes in grafting, the medicinal uses of plants, the wonders revealed by the microscope, the physiological and psychological horrors of war, the differences between rural and urban living, the plight of the debtor, and the effects of various liquors on the system. In the following passage, one of many on the same or related subjects in Cyder, Philips explains the art of successful grafting:

Wouldst thou, thy Vats with gen'rous Juice should froth?  
 Respect thy Orchats; think not, that the Trees  
 Spontaneous will produce an wholsom Draught.  
 Let Art correct thy Breed; from Parent Bough  
 A Cyon meetly sever; after, force  
 A way into the Crabstock's close-wrought Grain  
 By Wedges, and within the living Wound  
 Enclose the Foster Twig; nor over-nice  
 Refuse with thy own Hands around to spread  
 The binding Clay: Ee'r-long their differing Veins  
 Unite, and kindly Nourishment convey  
 To the new Pupil; now he shoots his Arms  
 With quickest Growth; now shake the teeming Trunc,  
 Down rain th' impurpl'd Balls, ambrosial Fruit.  
 Whether the Wilding's Fibres are contriv'd  
 To draw th' Earth's purest Spirit, and resist  
 It's Feculence, which in more porous Stocks  
 Of Cyder-Plants finds Passage free, or else  
 The native Verjuice of the Crab, deriv'd

Thro' th' infix'd Graff, a grateful Mixture forms  
 Of tart and sweet; whatever be the Cause,  
 This doubtful Progeny by nicest Tastes  
 Expected best Acceptance finds, and pays  
 Largest Revenues to the Orchat-Lord.

(Cy, I, 273-296)

## XII. Spelling

Philips follows Milton's spelling rather closely, giving his poetry an appearance of quaintness and antiquity. Many words, of course, retained the spelling in the eighteenth century that they possessed in Milton's day, but many others had changed. Philips even goes so far as to preserve many of the phonetic spellings in Milton's poetry.

"Rolling" is spelled "rowling" by both poets, and "boiling" retains the spelling "boyling." Rather than use terminal "-ed," Milton preferred words with the suffix "t": "gapt" (gaped), "belcht," and "forct." The OED notes that the use of "t" rather than terminal "-ed" was a common practice in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but was seldom used later. Philips follows Milton in this practice with "lopt" (lopped), "bedeckt," "repulst," and "leapt." The apostrophe is used endlessly by the two poets: "seduc'd," "oppos'd," "gen'rous," "op'nd," "jav'lin"; they differ from each other only when the meter of a given sentence requires an elided syllable, i.e., "generous."

## XIII. Compound Epithets

One of the Homeric influences on Milton's style is the use of unusual compound epithets. Typical examples are

"Heaven-banish'd host," "shape star-bright," "joint-racking rheums," "double-fonted stream," "three-bolted thunder," "arch-chemic sun," "night-warbling bird," "sky-tinctured grain," "half-rounding guards," and "love-labour'd song."

Philips utilizes the compound epithet in his verse, though not as frequently nor in as exotically poetic sense as his master: "fever-cooling stream," "forest-rustling breeze," "various-blossom'd plants," "ill-perfuming scent," "voice ill-boding," "turbid-streaming clouds," "loosen'd winds infuriate" (infuriate used as an adjective), "high-stretching hills," "dire-clinging vines," and "new-creating earth." In both Milton and Philips the epithet may come before or after the person, place, or thing it accompanies.

#### XIV. Latinisms

##### A. Inversion of Word Order

A distinguishing feature of Milton's style is his use of Latin constructions, syntax, and diction. He found these necessary to achieve the dignified tone, the mood of reserved grandeur, and the economy and density of expression he desired in his poetry. The most obvious Latinism in the works of Milton is the inversion of the natural order of words and phrases.

In the ordering of his . . . words one sees the effect of Milton's study and practice of Latin verse. The Latin poet, writing in an inflected language, could distribute his words in varying order, and so could develop the sense flexibly, organically, and in a cumulative way;



this latitude in the placing of his words also made it easier to control the stresses and movement of the verse in accordance with the meaning.<sup>22</sup>

Rare is the paragraph in Paradise Lost that contains no example of the reversing of the normal order of words:

Ten paces huge  
He back recoil'd.

(PL, VI, 193-194)

Mee of these  
Nor skill'd nor studious, higher Argument  
Remains. . . .

(PL, IX, 41-43)

. . . now scatter'd lies  
With Carcasses and Arms th' ensanguin'd Field  
Deserted: Others to a City strong  
Lay siege, encamp.

(PL, XI, 653-656)

Thus they thir doubtful consultations dark  
Ended rejoicing in their matchless Chief.

(PL, II, 486-487)

The poetry of John Philips is liberally sprinkled with inversions of word order:

Where gates impregnable and coercive chains  
In durance strict detain him. . . .

(SS, 65-66)

They journey toilsome, unfatigu'd with length  
Of March, unstruck with Horror at the sight  
Of Alpine Ridges bleak. . . .

(B1, 39-41)

. . . when lo!  
The Ground adust her riven Mouth disparts,  
Horrible Chasm, profound!

(Cy, I, 226-228)

. . . they, in Multitude  
Superior, fed their Thoughts with Prospect vain  
Of Victory, and Rapine, reck'ning what  
From ransom'd Captives would accrue.

(B1, 85-88)

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<sup>22</sup>Wright, p. 79.



Behind with wrath  
Resistless, th' Eager English Champions Press  
(B1, 218-219)

Philips will often place an epithet after almost every noun in a given sentence:

. . . strait his Body, to the Touch  
Obsequious, (as whilom Knights were wont)  
To some enchanted Castle is convey'd,  
Where Gates impregnable, and coercive Chains  
In Durance strict detain him. . . .  
(SS, 62-66)

### C. Omission of Words

A third Latinism employed by Milton is the omission of superfluous words not necessary to the sense of a given sentence. This device allows for condensation, brevity, and compactness of expression.

Or in the emptier waste, resembling Air,  
Weighs his spread wings, at leisure to behold  
Far off th' Empyrean Heav'n, extended wide  
In circuit, undetermin'd square or round.  
(PL, II, 1047-1050)

Milton could have written several pages of descriptive passages to describe what he said in eight words. The underlined sentences in

For the mind and spirit remains  
Invincible, and vigor soon returns,  
Though all our Glory extinct, and happy state  
Here swallow'd up in endless misery  
(PL, I, 139-142)

are compact expressions of a number of complex ideas.

Concise expression and omission of superfluous verbiage is an obvious characteristic of the poetry of Philips:

My Galligaskins that have long withstood  
 The Winter's Fury, and Encroaching Frosts,  
 By Time subdu'd, (what will not Time subdue!)  
An horrid Chasm disclose, with Orifice  
Wide, Discontinuous

(SS, 121-125)

Here the poet has described in eight words an object that might have occupied dozens of lines. Similarly, in the lines

Round his Sacred Head  
The glowing Balls play innocent, while He  
With dire impetuous Sway deals Fatal Blows  
Amongst the scatter'd Gauls.

(B1, 191-194)

Philips is able to give his estimation ("sacred") of a leader in battle (Churchill, at the Battle of Blenheim) and describe his avoidance of injury in a line and a half. In the final two lines, the hero's role in the battle and its resultant effect on the enemy is presented in the briefest possible manner. Philips is thus achieving the condensation, brevity, and compactness of expression so often noted in Milton.

#### XV. Imagery of Sensation

One of the elements of Milton's style that accounts for a large part of its beauty and impact is imagery of sensation. His poetry is filled with allusions to sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste:

At length a universal hubbub wild  
 Of stunning sounds and voices confused  
 Borne through the hollow dark assaults his ear  
 With loudest vehemence. . . .

(PL, II, 951-954)

. . . I found me laid  
 In balmy sweat, which with his beams the sun  
 Soon dried, and on the reeking moisture fed

(PL, VIII, 254-256)

. . . in the door he sat  
 Of his cool bower, while now the mounted sun  
 Shot down direct his fervid rays to warm  
 Earth's inmost womb, more warmth than Adam needs  
 (PL, V, 299-302)

Our Saviour lifting up his eyes beheld  
 In ample space under the broadest shade  
 A table richly spread, in regal mode,  
 With dishes piled, and meats of noblest sort  
 And savor, beasts of chase, or fowl of game,  
 In pastry built, or from the spit, or boiled,  
 Grisamber-steamed. . . .  
 (PR, 338-344)

. . . and pressed her matron lip  
 With kisses pure: aside the devil turned  
 For envy, yet with jealous leer malign  
 Eyed them askance. . . .  
 (PL, IV, 501-504)

Imagery of sensation is also an important element in  
 the poetry of John Philips:

. . . with a warming puff  
 Regale chilled fingers; or from tube as black  
 As winter chimney or well polished jet  
 Exhale Mundungus, ill-perfuming scent  
 (SS, 18-21)

With vocal heel thrice thundering at my gates,  
 With hideous accent thrice he calls; I know  
 The voice ill-boding and the solemn sound  
 (SS, 39-41)

. . . if he his ample palm  
 Should haply on ill-fated shoulder lay  
 Of debtor, straight his body to the touch  
 Obsequious. . . .  
 (SS, 60-62)

Nor taste the fruits that the sun's genial rays  
 Mature, John-apple, nor the downy peach,  
 Nor walnut in rough-furrowed coat secure,  
 Nor medlar, fruit delicious in decay  
 (SS, 116-120)

. . . And now the low'ring Sky,  
 And baleful Lightning, and the Thunder, Voice  
 Of angry Gods, that rattled solemn. . . .  
 (Cy, I, 206-208)

Now from each Van  
 The brazen Instruments of Death discharge  
 Horrible Flames, and turbid streaming Clouds  
 Of Smoak sulphureous; intermix't with these  
 Large globous Irons fly, of dreadful Hiss,  
 Singeing the Air. . . .

(B1, 143-148)

XVI. One Part of Speech for Another

One of the more obvious and frequently discussed stylistic idiosyncrasies of Milton is the use of one part of speech for another. The most common example of this is the employment of an adjective for a noun:

And through the palpable obscure find out  
 His uncouth way. . . .

(PL, II, 406-407)

Over the vast abrupt, ere he arrive

(PL, II, 408)

. . . yet oft they quit  
 The dank, and rising on stiff Pennons, tow'r  
 The mid Aereal Sky. . . .

(PL, VII, 440-442)

Almost as common is the substitution of an adjective where an adverb would ordinarily be employed:

He ceas'd, for both seem'd highly pleas'd, and Death  
 Grinn'd horrible a ghastly smile. . . .

(PL, II, 845-846)

So saying, his proud step he scornful turn'd

(PL, IV, 536)

Frequently verbs seem to be used as nouns:

After short silence then  
 And summons read, the great consult began

(PL, I, 797-798)

Instant without disturb they took Alarm

(PL, VI, 549)

Occasionally an adjective is used as a verb:

May serve to better us and worse our foes  
(PL, VI, 440)

Sometimes Milton will employ a verb or an adjective in a participial sense, as

Yet oft his heart, divine of something ill.  
(PL, IX, 845)

Philips interchanges one part of speech for another quite as frequently as Milton, though with somewhat less verve and subtlety. He commonly employs adjectives to serve where adverbs are expected:

Thus while my joyless minutes tedious flow  
(SS, 35)

Of brazen Enginry, that ceaseless storm  
The Bastion of a well-built City. . . .  
(Cy, I, 195-196)

Thy plummy Crest  
Nods horrible. . . .  
(Bl, 79-80)

The thronging Populace with hasty Strides  
Press furious. . . .  
(Cy, II, 221-222)

Adjectives are sometimes used as nouns:

. . . over dank, and dry,  
They journey toilsome, unfatigu'd with Length  
Of March. . . .  
(Bl, 38-40)

That stretch atop the solitary vast  
(Cy, II, 479)

Nor does he spare the sweet and succulent,  
But bares the knife. . . .  
(Cy, I, 316-317)

Less frequently, adjectives are made into verbs:

. . . when Hope serenes the Heart  
(Cer, 176)

Greened all the year. . . . till Spring

(Cy, II, 336-337)

Occasionally Philips will force a verb into service as a noun:

Came on, and they, appall'd with one amaze  
(Bl, 221)

. . . an overwhelm of thund'rous death  
(Bl, 411)

Finally, he will sometimes use a noun for a verb:

The blackened Night that glooms us. . . .  
(Cy, II, 94)

#### XVII. Epic Simile

One of the outstanding elements in Milton's poetic style is the use of scores of epic similes. Many are little more than digressions or devices to enhance poetic effect. The majority, however, are justified, first, because they elevate the poetry "by glorious images and sentiments"; secondly, because they "supply variety and relief by introducing scenes outside the proper scope of the story."<sup>23</sup>

Milton uses a large number of these epic similes in portraying the fallen angels, their abode and their activities. They are one of his main means of presenting scenes and figures outside the range of human experience; and in order to sustain both their strangeness and their sublimity he most often chooses for analogy things fabulous or remote. It is obvious that such analogies must be fully developed in order to work.<sup>24</sup>

An example of enhancing the poetry with "glorious images and sentiments" is the first simile in Paradise Lost, where

<sup>23</sup>Wright, p. 89.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 96.



Satan is compared to a Leviathan as he lies outstretched on the burning lake:

Thus Satan talking to his nearest Mate  
 With Head up-lift above the wave, and Eyes  
 That sparkling blaz'd, his other Parts besides  
 Prone on the Flood, extended long and large  
 Lay floating many a rood, in bulk as huge  
 As whom the Fables name of monstrous size,  
 Titanian or Earth-born, that warr'd on Jove,  
 Briarios or Typhon, whom the Den  
 By ancient Tarsus held, or that Sea-beast  
 Leviathan, which God of all his works  
 Created hugest that Swim th' Ocean stream:  
 Him haply slumbring on the Norway foam  
 The Pilot of som small night-founderd Skiff,  
 Deeming som land, oft, as Sea-men tell,  
 With fixed Anchor in his scaly rinde  
 Moors by his side under the Lee, while Night  
 Invests the Sea, and wished Morn delays.  
 (PL, I, 192-208)

John Philips employs the simile for the same reasons as Milton--enhancement of poetic effect, digression, imagery, and variety. The vivid comparison of the Battle of Blenheim to a thunderstorm is one of Philips's most successful similes. Its effect is to provide the reader with an image of the deafening noise of battle:

Thus thro' each Army Death, in various Shapes,  
 Prevail'd; here mangled Limbs, here Brains and Gore  
 Lye clotted; lifeless Some: With Anguish These  
 Gnashing, and loud Laments invoking Aid,  
 Unpity'd, and unheard; the louder Din  
 Of Guns, and Trumpets clang, and solemn Sound  
 Of Drums o'ercame their Groans. In equal Scale  
 Long hung the Fight, few Marks of Fear were seen,  
 None of retreat: As when two adverse Winds,  
 Sublim'd from dewy Vapours, in Mid Sky  
 Engage with horrid Shock, the ruffled Brine  
 Roars stormy, they together dash the Clouds,  
 Levying their Equal Force with utmost Rage;  
 Long undecided lasts the Airy Strife.  
 (B1, 269-282)

The logical conclusion to be drawn from this chapter

is that John Philips was thoroughly familiar with the complex Miltonic style. He was able to imitate elements of this style with more skill and consistency than any other poet in an age that specialized in such imitations. To his influence may be laid much of the eighteenth-century vogue for Miltonic blank verse. No assertion has been made that the quality of Philips's verse approached the magnificence of Paradise Lost. He was no epic poet, and his poetry fell short of greatness. However, he was thoroughly aware of the poetic qualities which insure the immortality of Milton's works. These qualities he attempted to master. He captured the letter, but not the spirit, of the blind poet; the spirit was beyond his intent.

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSIONS

The justification of this study must lie more in the historical importance of John Philips than in the quality of his verse. We have seen the extent of his popularity in the eighteenth century. "The Splendid Shilling" reached its ninth edition before 1720, while "Bleinheim" saw its sixth in the same year and Cyder its fourth in 1728. The three together reached a tenth edition in 1744. "The Splendid Shilling" was translated into Italian and Latin and turned into rhyme; Cyder was translated into French, Italian, and Latin.

The poetry of Philips held the respect and admiration of many of the major writers of the eighteenth century. Addison felt that "The Splendid Shilling" was "The finest burlesque in the British language," while Johnson saw it as a work with "the uncommon merit of an original design." Praise of the shilling poem came from Thomas and Joseph Warton, Matthew Prior, Gay, Cowper, Somerville, and Pope. It was lauded in the nineteenth century by Hazlitt, Hunt, and Crabbe.

Cyder also was commended by some of the major literary figures of the age. Johnson thought it good enough to stand with Virgil's Georgics, while Somerville advised the aspiring

poet to "Read Philips much, consider Milton more." In The Dunciad, Pope praised Philips's skill in imitating the Miltonic style:

But with true Rage inspir'd he takes his flight,  
And bravely reaches his old Master's Height.

Thomson, Smart, Cowper, Gay, and Thomas Warton also expressed admiration for Cyder.

Philips was an important influence in the development of eighteenth-century parody, burlesque, and the mock-heroic. Scores of burlesque poems were written throughout the period, many of which were closely imitative of "The Splendid Shilling." The poem pointed the way to Miltonic burlesque by providing a brief and clever parody of the Grand Style in blank verse. Philips's first work also provided a number of themes that proved congenial to mock-heroic or parodic treatment: the plight of the destitute poet; various liquors and their effect on the human system; money or the lack of money; penury; and men and things of low estate. It may be safely assumed, as Professor Bond notes, that "The Splendid Shilling" was the most powerful force in burlesque blank verse of the eighteenth century.

Philips's Cyder is the poem which firmly implanted the English georgic as a type and determined its form. Together with Thomson's The Seasons, it was the model after which most works of the kind were patterned. Cyder is generally acknowledged to be the first English poem of any importance in which a true georgic theme is treated in the manner and spirit of Virgil's Georgics. Its influence has been noted in such works

as Gay's Trivia, Thomson's The Seasons, Dyer's The Fleece, and Cowper's The Task.

The role of Philips in the popularization of eighteenth-century blank verse was one of some consequence. Unrhymed iambic pentameter was a relatively ignored poetic form between the death of Milton and the composition of Philips's first work; fifty years later blank verse had become the usual vehicle for many kinds of poetry. The widespread interest in and imitation of such works as "The Splendid Shilling" and Cyder was in part responsible for this movement to blank verse. In helping to popularize the grand Miltonic style, Philips proved to be one of the significant factors in the movement.

Philips imitated the style of Milton with unsurpassed skill. Although his poetry fell short of the greatness of his master's, he was thoroughly familiar with the mechanics of the Miltonic manner. The run-on line and blank verse paragraph, inverted word order, conversion of one part of speech into another, unusual compounds, appositions, parentheses, elision of words, Latinisms, long series of exotic and proper names, epic similes--all the artful devices of Milton's poetry were mastered by Philips. Many eighteenth-century poets followed his lead in imitating the Grand Style, but none matched him in skill and thoroughness.

In spite of the fact that Philips's poetry is considered by most critics to be somewhat less than great, it is surprising that he is not accorded more attention in the anthologies and literary histories of England. Sherburn gives him less

than three lines, while Beers, Dobree, and many others dismiss him with a contemptuous shrug or fail to mention him at all

Yet, even the most skeptical critic must admit to the importance of four conclusions to be drawn from this study:

1. Philips was a major figure in the development of eighteenth-century burlesque poetry. His style (Miltonic parody) and themes were copied or imitated by dozens of poets of the period. From his example came most of the unrhymed burlesques and humorous poems on liquor and related subjects that were popular throughout the century.

2. Philips was an important influence in the eighteenth-century renaissance of blank verse. As the only widely-read writer of unrhymed poetry between Milton and Thomson, he helped to endow the form with what none of his contemporaries were able to give it: popularity. Initially, this appreciation was by way of humorous application, but the possibilities and merits of blank verse soon became evident to more serious poets. The number of poems in blank verse following the death of Milton and prior to Philips's first work in 1701 was nine; by the end of the century more than one thousand blank verse poems had been composed. The position of Philips as the first widely-read poet in this development is surely more than coincidence.

3. John Philips was the first successful georgic poet in English. He determined the form of most of the later productions based on Virgil's Georgics.

4. Philips led many to an aesthetic appreciation and understanding of Milton and his blank verse. As the first great imitator of the Miltonic manner, Philips provided his contemporaries with some idea of the intricacy, complexity, and beauty of the Grand Style. Many attempted to follow in his foot-steps.

For these reasons, the twentieth-century estimation of the literary importance of John Philips needs to be reevaluated. He was not a great poet, but he was an influential figure in the development of eighteenth-century English literature.

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