OUR KNOWLEDGE of the rise of polite letters in provincial Pennsylvania derives in great part from two sources: Franklin's *Autobiography* and E.M.'s poem, "The Wits and Poets of Pennsylvania," published in Bradford's *American Weekly Mercury* (May 6, 1731). Historians from M. Katherine Jackson (1906) to Kenneth Silverman (1968) have used these writings as vehicles for understanding the origin of literary culture in Philadelphia during the 1720s.¹ Yet both texts contain more information than has heretofore been adduced. E.M.'s poem, in particular, possesses a wealth of unrecognized material on the work of the more important bellestrists of Pennsylvania.

early Philadelphia. I will reread "The Wits and Poets of Pennsylvania" in this essay, using it to reconstruct the literary history of 1720s Philadelphia. I shall also use it to introduce other texts that can be attributed to each of the wits for the first time. These writings show that a more coherent neoclassical literary culture—a culture organized around the myth of the *translatio studii*—existed in early Philadelphia than has heretofore been imagined. The wits and poets used the *translatio* myth to envision Philadelphia as the future sanctuary of world art, the "New Athens."

"The Wits and Poets of Pennsylvania, A Poem, Part I" was written by Elizabeth Magawley, a female correspondent of Joseph Norris, and published as the coup de grace of a paper war in the pages of Andrew Bradford's gazette. Part II never appeared. Magawley had initiated the war on January 5, 1730/31, challenging male wits to contend about issues of love, courtship, and marriage. Magawley's ("Generosa's") challenge was taken up by two writers: a representative of mock sense, Generosus, who spends most of his epistle of January 12 praising her judgment before working himself up to a proposal of marriage; and a burlesque rake, Ignavus, who defends shallowness in his letter of the January 19, and follows with a poem on January 26. In his introduction to the poem, Ignavus indicates that Magawley was a woman of "those mature Years, which crowd in between Twenty and Thirty." This observation prompts a poetic meditation on the fate of aging beauties that climaxes in a double-entendre question,

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Shall not that Grove where wanton Cupids play,
Shrivel'd with Cold and undistinguish'd lay;
When Hebe youthful Goddess scorns to grace
The deep recesses of that Sacred Place?
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Instead of replying directly to Ignavus, Magawley chose to reflect upon the entire tribe of wits then inhabiting Pennsylvania. Thus, "The Wits and Poets." Her epigraph, drawn from the Sixth of Horace's Odes, Book 4, declared by what authority she could comment: "Spir-itum Phoebus mihi, Phoebus Artem/ Carminis Nomenque dedit Poe-

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3 "Ignavus" [Jacob Taylor?], *American Weekly Mercury*, 578 (Jan., 1730/31)
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tae.” (To Phoebus I owe my art and inspiration/ Phoebus has conferred
upon me the name of poet.) Her selection evinces wit, for while as-
serting the divine pedigree of her art, Magawley was also calling to
mind in her educated readers the remainder of the ode. No doubt they
recalled the closing image of feminine ability in poetry. Horace speaks:

One day, girl, when you marry, you shall tell them,
"When time brought round the great Centennial, I, too,
Trained in the measures of the poet Horace,
Sang to the gods' delight."\(^4\)

Trained in Horatian measures, Magawley chose to open her verse
with one of Horace’s favorite devices, a scene of melancholic illumi-
nation:

‘TWAS when a gloom my pensive Soul o’re spread,
And every gay and cheerful Thought was fled;
As o’re the Expanded Fields I cast my Eye,
Two sportive, active Colts I chanc’t to spy.

The two colts represent Generosus and Ignavus. In a brief allegory,
Magawley narrates January’s paper war as a hippomachia:

A gamesome chace the Challenge first began,
And wanton Whinnies Eccho’d as they ran;
Then with a Wheel they Circled o’re the Ground,
And meeting, strove to show the highest Bound;
When Breast to Breast Erect, They paw’d the Air,
And loving Raps, by turns, as freely Share;
Descending then, Each in the Pseudo Fight
Embrac’d so lovingly, and strove to bite;
But biteing hard, the weakest gave a Roar,
Turn’d Tail, Kict up his Heels, and play’d no more.

The allegory recounts Generosus’s disinclination to match his mock
sense against Ignavus’s burlesque wit; Generosus retired from the field
immediately in the paper war. Magawley, however, conveys more than
the literal circumstance of the contest. She suggests the insubstantiality
of her rivals’ literary efforts; they are the mock fight of colts, not the
earnest battle of stallions. Furthermore, she prepares with her image of
the leaping horses the focal emblem of the poem—Pegasus flying with
the uncontrolled force of the imagination. For the common reader,

Magawley gives notice that her hippomachia is allegorical:

Bless Me, says I, so fares it with our Witts!
These Colts have only Acted o're their Tricks.
Strait at the World, I felt my Bosome glow,
Nor could have Ease, till I those Witts should show.

Colts transform into poets at mention of the word, “Witts.” At the moment of interpretative metamorphosis Magawley is infused with the *furor poeticus*, becoming a poet herself.

The remainder of the poem consists of her “inspired” criticism of the wits and poets of Pennsylvania—Joseph Breintnall, Jacob Taylor, George Webb, an unnamed poet often supposed to be Samuel Keimer, and Henry Brooke. There is a rationale to this order of discussion. She begins with Breintnall and Taylor because she believes them to be Generosus and Ignavus. Breintnall could well have been Generosus; he had frequently employed the persona of a mock man of sense in his “Busy Body Essays” published in the *American Weekly Mercury* throughout 1729. Taylor is more difficult to identify as Ignavus, for though Taylor had ridiculed rakes in other writings (see the verse for February in his 1745 almanac), he avoided using amorous innuendo in his poetry, even for burlesque purposes. It is clear, however, that Magawley suspected Taylor of being Ignamus, for in her criticism of Taylor she said that he possessed “A Muse with Fire fraught yet”—a play on the pseudonym Ignamus (spiritless).

Let us turn to a consideration of each of the wits, seeing what can be discovered about them.

*Joseph Breintnall*. Pennsylvania’s “first native poet” has long seemed a phantom of colonial literary history, always registered in our awareness, yet never as a substantial presence. Many critics have observed that Breintnall’s reputation has been eclipsed in posterity’s eyes by that of his friend, Benjamin Franklin. Attempts to assess his talent have

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been frustrated by the difficulty of establishing the canon of his works. Thus, historians have deferred to the judgments of Franklin and Magawley, repeating Franklin's statement that he was a "good-natur'd friendly middle-ag'd Man, a great Lover of Poetry, reading all he could meet with, and writing some that was tolerable." Then they qualified it with Magawley's evaluation:

For choice of Diction, I would Bre/in/tn/a/l choose,
For just Conceptions, and a ready Muse,
Yet is that Muse too labour'd and prolix
And seldom, on the Wing, knows where to fix.

Historians have been silent, however, about the question which these judgments prompt: how did a provincial merchant, a Quaker in a colony which manifested the Quaker disinterest in literary culture, become a lover of verse and an adept in its mysteries? Unlike Benjamin Franklin, Breintnall did not enjoy a childhood surrounded by printed matter and a pressroom's convenient store of books. Since no childhood

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Breintnall's canon has not been established with certainty. He is known to have composed the yearly verses for the newboys of the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, the two surviving verses of this sort are reprinted C. William Miller, *Benjamin Franklin's Philadelphia Printing* (Philadelphia, 1974). The following verses can be attributed to Breintnall with some certainty: "Written by way of grateful Return for some kind and hospitable Entertainment receiv'd at his Friend's Habitation," *American Weekly Mercury*, 488 (May 15, 1729), [Lemay *Calendar of American Poetry*], "A Plain Description of one single Street in this City," *American Weekly Mercury*, 493 (June 19, 1729), [Jackson, *Outlines of the Literary History*], "Reading in Jacob's Almanack for the Year 1736," *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 370 (Jan 6, 1740), [J. Philip Goldberg, *PMHB*, (April, 1962)], "A noted Preacher [John Salkeld] among the people called Quakers," *American Weekly Mercury*, 1044 (Jan 3, 1740), [J. Smith, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Friends' Books* (1867)], the prefatory poem to George Webb's *Batchelor's Hall* (Philadelphia, 1731), signed, and "July 1740 On the lately discover'd Wild Raspberries," MS [Silverman, *Colonial American Poetry*]. J. A Leo Lemay has suggested that three further verses may be by Breintnall "Madness an Ode," *Pennsylvania Gazette*, 506 (Aug 24, 1738), and two verses marking the death of the hack poet, John Dommett, published in the *American Weekly Mercury* (Aug 2, 1739). The verses on Dommett were probably written by Jacob Taylor, the Aug. 9 verse in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* is a more likely candidate for Breintnall's authorship. "Madness an Ode" varies too greatly in tone and vocabulary from the other verses to be proven on grounds of internal evidence to be by Breintnall. Nicholas Scull's verse on the Junto indicates that Breintnall was a prolific poet who also wrote plays. None have survived.
records have survived for the poet, we can only speculate about the origins of his love for verse. Breintnall may have first encountered poetry at school, for two of Philadelphia’s schoolmasters were practitioners of the art. Thomas Makin, master of the Quaker Latin School, was a modest writer of Latin and English verse. Jacob Taylor, whom we will discuss at some length later, presided over a mathematical academy. Though nothing certain can be adduced about the circumstances of Breintnall’s initial encounter with verse, a fair amount can be ascertained about his apprenticeship in the art. He was the product of the first circle of belles lettres formed in Philadelphia—that which gathered around Aquila Rose in 1719.

Rose’s influence on the literary culture of early Pennsylvania has never adequately been measured. Belles lettres had been practiced casually in Philadelphia before Rose appeared in 1719. The schoolmasters wrote their didactic verses; the philomaths composed their almanac doggerel; and the few educated men in the territory occasionally adorned their correspondence with rhyme and book talk. Lovers of writing and reading engaged in no regular exchange. Rose single-handedly altered this state of affairs. His gift for conversation and his romantic background (he had become a sailor and vagabond after being jilted by his fiancée in Britain) drew people into a company.

7 Thomas Makin, besides being Latin master at the Quaker school, served as clerk to the Assembly of the Province, a post several other poets would later hold. As a verse writer he is known primarily for his Latin poems, “Encomium Pennsylvania,” (1728) and “In Laudeo Pennsylvanienae,” (1729), Makin’s English translation of the former was printed in a biographical sketch of the teacher in PMHB, 37 (1913), 369-74. He was also, as Lemay suggested, the author of the ode “on the arrival of the Honourable Thomas Penn, Esq” in the American Weekly Mercury (Aug. 17, 1732). I attribute a further verse the anonymous “on the instant cold Weather,” American Weekly Mercury (Feb. 6, 1732/33), which recasts lines contained in Makin’s English version of “Encomium Pennsylvania.” Makin died, an apparent suicide, in 1733.

8 The correspondence between Henry Brooke and James Logan best illustrates the last. Though Brooke’s half of the correspondence has been lost, the character of the exchange can be determined from the Logan Letterbooks in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. See in particular the letters for March, 1718 and “The Clementina Feast, 1725” in letterbook No.2.
His name soon known, it led the Curious, where
They might his pleasing Conversation share.
Thus he, who late no friendly Pleasures knew,
Had daily now kind Visitanst in View:
Each comes of Choice, and all his Friendship claim,
They courted him, and he delighted them
Soft in Discourse, and ease of access,
Thankful his Mind, persuasive his address,
The learn'd approv'd his Wit, the unlearn'd admir'd,
And docile youths to his Regard aspir'd.  

Among the throng was Breintnall. Other lovers of conversation and polite letters included Jacob Taylor, David French, William Allen, and Lt. Gov. William Keith.

Gov. Keith's connection with Rose had more than literary motivation. Throughout the early 1720s the Governor struggled to wrest dominion over Pennsylvania from the Penn Proprietary and its landed allies. Keith was constantly searching for allies of his own, particularly young men able with a pen (recall Franklin's dealings with him at a later date). Keith found Rose of use and rewarded his talents with the clerkship of the Assembly—the stronghold of antiproprietary power. In June of 1721 the Governor had Rose accompany him and Col. John French (uncle of poet David French) on an expedition to the Indian lands to serve as clerk for the negotiations. Rose not only transcribed the proceedings but penned a panegyric ode "To his Excellency Sir William Keith" advertising the Governor's project.  

"Thou, great

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9 [Joseph Breintnall], "To the MEMORY of AQUILA ROSE, Deceased, "Poems on several Occasions, by Aquila Rose To which are prefixed, Some other Pieces writ to him, and to his Memory after his Decease (Philadelphia, 1740), 3-12 I attribute the poem to Breintnall for several reasons the long passages of natural description concerning the rivers are characteristic of his descriptive interest in nature, Jacob Taylor would have been thanked for his contributions to the collection by Joseph Rose in Joseph's letter of Nov 11, 1741 if it had been his, Taylor and Breintnall were the sole remaining members of the Rose circle still in Philadelphia at the time of the collection twenty years later Breintnall is the probable source for most of the collected poems, since he was an associate of Joseph Rose, composing the New Year's verses for the newspaper carriers William Allen may have been another source for manuscripts No poems from Allen's hand are known to exist, and Franklin's Poor Richard's verse under November 1739 suggests he may have never written verse "A—— ——, they say, has Wit, for what? For writing?—No, For writing not "

KEITH, thro’ Toils and Travels past/ Shalt make an Eden of a spacious Waste/ To Indians thou shalt a Lycurgus be.” Rose’s support was rewarded with a grant to develop and enjoy the proceeds from a ferry across the Schuylkill. Providence, however, did not decree that he should enjoy the rewards of this grant, for Rose contracted a chill from the river water and died. His demise prompted public mourning and the composition of four major elegies.\(^{11}\)

It is tempting to see Keith’s hand in the formation of Rose’s group,\(^{12}\) or to view the group as an analogue to the Tiff Club and the Leather Apron Club, the governor’s political pressure groups. The evidence, however, suggests something else. Rose and his comrades seem to have risen above party passion in most of their compositions. Among Rose’s few surviving works is an ode praising Richard Hill, one of the leading figures of the proprietary interest. Rose commended Hill’s abilities as a judge, likening the magistrate to Scipio.

Joseph Breintnall admired Rose’s use of poetry to foster a politics of virtue untainted by party passion, for he composed the following encomium:

Joseph Breintnall

*An Encomium to AQUILA ROSE, on his Art in Praising.*

RECEIVE th’ Addresses of a thankful Muse,
Who, as oblig’d, her Tribute still renews,
Pays what she can, her Mite she freely gives,
Not half what *Rose* deserves, or she receives;
With tardy Pinions I attempt his Praise,
And at his Feet lay down my abject Lays:
And much I fear his speculative Eyes,
Which like Apollo’s wander thro the Skies,


In distance Scenes may be employ'd, nor know
The humble Off'ring that I make below,
So trample under Foot the groveling Wit of Joe/
Teach me to rise in Accents like to thine,
And in such Cadence smoothly to decline,
(So with strong Wings the tow'ring Bird of Jove
Resistless gains his ample Range Above,
With level Quills he circles down again,
And lightning, skims with Pleasure of the Plain.)
Then, as in such Poetic Wealth I grow,
More rich Applauses shall my Muse bestow
When thou thy Hero's Character wouldst paint,
Or bring to Light the Vertues of a Saint,
An awful Homage ev'ry Line attends,
And ev'ry Reader to the Picture bends
Nor can they see what they so much adore
Without extolling too the Painter's Pow'r
But when to foreign Climes thy Verse shall spread,
And Ill's aggrandiz'd Honour shall be read,
Each doubting Ear attentive to the Song,
Arraigns the Story, and will have it wrong,
Examines if a Mortal e'er was known
Cou'd all those Graces, and those Blessings own
Again, thy well digested Words they scan,
Grow credulous, and laud the godlike Man
(What they prevailing Numbers do declare
We're apt to grant, tho' Flatt'ry may be there,)
And wish to view that Worthy's rev'rend Face
Who in Fame's Temple merits such a Place
How does thy nervous Genius proudly bound,
Fearless of Rivals, on our vulgar Ground,
In right of Alle/n's arbitrating Sense,
His graceful Mein, and pow'rful Eloquence,
Such tuneful Language from his Lips proceeds,
And such bright Reason blazons from his Deeds,
That Orators may learn of him to gain
Their Cause from all, and Malice to restrain
Go on, and find more Candidates for Praise,
Our infant Country's Reputation raise,
Doubt not but Strangers far remote will come
For what they are so much in Want at home,
And visit us as ancient Greece or Rome
Angels (permit me) too may deign to see
Those Characters sublimely drawn by thee,
For not being present when a Soul imbib’d
Such vast Endowments as thou hast describ’d,
Would know from what cælestial Fount they sprung,
And why they’re absent, and so long unsung.

Perhaps the World, in Ages not arriv’d,
Will say thy Works were near alike contriv’d
To that great Macedonian’s, first in Fame,
Who to preserve and magnify his Name
Caus’d Armour of prodigious Size and Weight
To be embowel’d deep in Earth, ’till late,
By Delvers found, they might by Signals know
He did some Race of Giants overthrow.
But ah! too fond of Fame, ‘twas meanly done,
When he’d enough already bravely won.

Superlatively high thou aimst to soar,
Wouldst thou thy gallant Feathers stoop to low’r,
In easy Panegyrick’s Truth display,
And spread thy Labours to the Face of Day,
Where Fact, as well as Patterns, might appear,
Thou needst not Satyrs from the Criticks fear,
Spurn not thy willing Muse, but regularly steer.

The encomium has a dual purpose: to exercise the techniques of poetic praise and to suggest that both art and politics in the New World were praiseworthy. The latter end possesses for us the greater interest. No subject caused greater anxiety for a colonial than the status of the New World vis-a-vis the Old. Was America the refuge of convicts, religious malcontents, and second-rate adventurers? Or was it the arena of the world’s moral redemption, the home of God’s saving remnant? Breintnall was unequivocal in his belief: Pennsylvania was the hope and relief of Europe. The virtue of provincial politicians, displayed to foreign climes in verse untainted by the desire to flatter, would draw strangers to the New World, seeking “For what they are so much in Want at Home.” Pennsylvania would be a New Greece, a New Rome.

Notice that Philadelphia would not become the New Jerusalem. Neoclassicism was the literary ideology of the Rose circle. Indeed, the bulk of the group’s surviving work consists of translations of the Latin
classics. Of Roman works the circle manifested a peculiar fascination for Ovid's *De Tristibus*. Taylor, Rose, and French all tried their hands at rendering in English portions of these elegies of Ovid's Scythian exile. The translations by Rose and French are arguably these poets' finest verse.¹⁴ That Roman songs of exile should preoccupy the circle is not unusual; most of the members had emigrated from Britain and knew the experience of expatriation first hand.

Breintnall, however, appears to have been a native of the New World. He did not share in this colleagues' nostalgia, nor did he choose to translate *De Tristibus*. Neoclassicism for Breintnall was not a lens for a looking backward toward a golden past. Rather, it provided a fund of types for defining the developing greatness of individual Americans and a myth which prophesied America's rising glory—the myth of the *translatio studii*. This myth, which told of the decline of the Old World and the westward movement of arts and empire, stood warrant for the future greatness of America. Breintnall would spend the remainder of his career describing the New World that would be the home of virtue and learning.¹⁵

There is something curiously domestic about the descriptive program of Breintnall's verse. Unlike the physio-theological writers of the period, Breintnall did not trace the whole pattern of nature.¹⁶ The scope of his inquiries was always limited: to the environs of the Schuylkill in "To the Memory of Aquila Rose, Desceas'd," to "A plain Description of one single street in this City," to a single plant in "On the lately discover'd Wild Raspberries." Magawley, in her criticism of Breint-

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¹⁴ French's surviving works were published in John Parke, *The Lyric Works of Horace, Translated into English Verse. To which are Added, a Number of Original Poems* (Philadelphia, 1786). All of the surviving works are translations of Latin poets *De Tristibus* Elegy 2 & 3 appear on 231-36. The remainder of his translations are renderings of Anacreon's *Odes*.


¹⁶ For an excellent example of native physico-theological verse, see [Henry Brooke], running poem above the monthly calendars, Felix Leeds, *The American ALMANACK For . . . 1728* (Philadelphia, 1727).
nall linked his domesticity of observation with a mundane regularity of style

So strictly regular is every Rise,
His Poems loose the Beauty's of Surprize,
In this, his Flame is like a Kitchen fire
We see the Billets cast, that mounts it higher
Yet thro' the whole appear'd an Excellence,
And more of Wit would shine, but curb'd to much by Sense

It is true that one does not encounter uncontrolled combustions of imagination in Breintnall's verse, there are no vast excursions of fancy over time and space, no broad sallies of wit. Yet her change of too great a regularity of style is unjust. His verse does not proceed at a fixed iambic trot, nor does it echo mechanically in couplet rhyme. Quite the opposite, we find experiments in syllabic accentual meter (his verse on wild raspberries) monosyllabic language (his verse in the *American Weekly Mercury* No. 488, May 15, 1729), and verse prosody (his description of a city street). Breintnall may have favored sense over wit, he did not surrender skill for convention.

Breintnall in 1731 was generally recognized as an elder master of poetry. The younger generation of poets associated with the Junto admired his craft as a pastoral poet, thinking him a Pennsylvanian Waller. Moreover, they found him a useful moral example, for his energy as a merchant, as secretary of the library company, and as sheriff of Philadelphia indicated that poetry was not tied to any disposition toward indolence.

Of the other poets in Pennsylvania, Breintnall himself esteemed one particularly Jacob Taylor. Of Taylor Breintnall wrote, "For thy great Parts, and Works, thy Name shall be/ Grateful to Men of Thought, and dear to me." In 1739 Breintnall suggested to Andrew Bradford that he print an Enchiridion collecting Taylor's poetry. Magawley was not so admiring.

*Jacob Taylor.* "With Years opprest, and compass'd round with Woes/
A Muse with Fire fraught yet T[a]yl[o]r shoes" When Magawley wrote these lines, Jacob Taylor was the oldest of the principal writers of the province. Born circa 1670, Taylor had emigrated from England to

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Pennsylvania sometime prior to the turn of the century. He was a
devout dissenter, and it is likely that he came to Pennsylvania to
escape the restraints put upon Quakers in Britain. Throughout his life
he would excoriate tyrants repeatedly in verse. Yet Taylor cannot be
deemed the stereotypical Quaker “of simple heart and little thought.”
His classical education and his ingenuity at mathematics surpassed even
that of the schoolish Presbyterians. He knew the Greek historians, the
Latin poets, and the astronomers of all ages and nations. Furthermore,
he put his learning to use, publishing an almanac, presiding over a
mathematical school, overseeing the Quaker Press from 1706-1712,
and serving as surveyor general of Pennsylvania. For these various
activities he was renowned. Among almanac makers he was deemed the
foremost, even by such an acerbic critic as Isaac Norris II:

Doughty T[aylo]r leads the Van,
Who many Years ago began
The Country and himself to please,
With his learn’d Ephemerides.
Titan Leeds, American Almanack . . . 1735[?]

As a surveyor he was trusted by the principal landholders in the
province, including the Penn family. At the time of Magawley’s poem,
Taylor had been tramping the wilderness with scale and sextant for over
a quarter century. Apparently the duties were beginning to wear, for
the poetess pointedly observed that he was “compassed round with
woes.” Taylor would retire in 1733, joining the household of his
nephew John Taylor, a politician, in Thornbury, Chester County.

Taylor’s poetic career, which seemed already marvelously long to
Magawley in 1731, would continue until his death in 1746. The fire of
inspiration burned so intensely that he left the largest body of poetry of
any Pennsylvanian pre-1750. Annually he produced approximately
200 lines of verse as literary matter for his almanacs from 1700 to 1726
and again from 1735 to 1746. Over and above the obligatory seasonal
verse and moral sentences, Taylor produced a succession of exceptional
performances: an anti-clerical diatribe (1707), a verse history of as-
tronomy (1708), translations of Latin epigrams (1712), a hudibrastic
satire on fortune-telling (1719), meditations on ex nihilo creation and

18 Verse for April, An ALMANACK for the Year 1705, Verse for May, EPHEMERIS
SIDERALIS . . . 1706, Verse after April, Pennsylvania, 1737, Verse after November, Pen-
sylvania, 1740, the majority of verses in Pennsylvania, 1744.
the myth of Atlantis (1737), a survey of the resources of Pennsylvania (1738), a satire on folk medicine (1738), a series of biblical contemplations (1741), “The Indian Prophecy” (1743), and a history of strange deaths (1744).

The subjects suggest why Magawley thought Taylor’s age significant. With his fascination with curious lore, his religious contentiousness, his scholarly melancholia, Taylor belonged more in the imaginative world of the seventeenth century than the reason and light of the Augustan Age. Taylor’s was a mind that could leap from the brooks of rural Pennsylvania to Numidia’s “Horrid fields of driving sand” with a couplet. His was a memory that could recall that one hundred forty years had passed since,

By Mark Scaliots curious hand and Skill,
    Lock and Key was made of Brass and Steel,
    Chain of Gold whose Links were Forty three,
    All not two grains and all drawn by a Flea.

In his satires Taylor imitated the narrative program of George Withers; in religious verse, the intensity of Cowley’s Davidies. Like his models, Taylor made the rhymed couplet his principal poetic vehicle, and like them he employed meter with a weightiness that Alexander Pope would render archaic. Magawley, a sympathizer with the neoclassical ideals of Pope and Gay, offered this criticism of Taylor’s art: “His fancy’s bold, harmonious are his Lays,/ And were He more correct, He’d reach the Bays.” The criticism must have rankled Taylor, for throughout his career his championed skill in all arts and sciences; to be chided for lack of skill as a poet struck at the heart of Taylor’s self-understanding as an artist. Magawley, however, cited his errors chapter and verse:

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19 He also quotes Milton, Dryden, Pope and Garth at various times. Cowley’s influence is particularly evident in the later almanacs which display a strong religious bent. See Taylor’s meditation on lies running over the heads of the months in Pensylvania, 1743. Taylor’s religious contentiousness was an object of satire by Isaac Norris, Jr. in “The Diarists,” Titan Leeds, An American Almanack for 1735, 11 11-44. [J. A. Leo Lemay discovered this poem and called it to my attention. Its manuscript form is included in the Joseph Norris commonplace book at the Huntington Library.]

20 Taylor’s narrative satires often dealt with misappreciation of skill, see the medical satire in the almanac for 1738, or the satire on fortune-telling in that of 1719.
But Heedless of the Rein, He Plys the Whip,
"And in's career make Heavenly Mansions speak,
"Avers, America's for this found Out,
"That Web/b might roar, and sing, and make a rout,
"Then tells us Georgee had been born at Rome,
"But that like other folks, He dropt at home

The quotations provide Magawley's criticisms with a guise—they are the witty coups of a coffee house critic. The critic chides Taylor in a low and familiar style for his extravagance in praising George Webb, the young author of *Batchelors-Hall*, a poem, celebrating the ideal domicile of a gentleman's club. Taylor had said of Webb that "Caelestial Mansions and the Muse presage, His Genius", in doing so he offended the wit's sense of propriety by making "Heavenly Mansions speak". This offense was nothing, however, compared to the unreasonable enthusiasm of Taylor's claims concerning Webb's talent. Not only did Taylor believe that Webb would be the prime agent of the transfer of arts to the New World, but that Webb's gift was so extraordinary that,

Had not the Tuneful Nine to England come,  
Th'ingenious Author had been born in Rome  
For in the Place the Muses most adorn,  
The lovely Bard was fated to be born  
For him this Western World was timely found,  
That on a Virgin Shore his Song might sound

By imagining a birth for Webb in Rome, Taylor could better serve the myth of the New Athens. Philadelphia could claim to be the sacred precinct of the Muses only by repressing the claims of London to that status. Taylor fashions his conceit to connect Philadelphia directly to the ancient locus of poetic fire—the original "New Athens"—Rome. The audacity of the myth was such that serious confutation would grant the myth too much credence, Magawley therefore adopts the voice of the coffee house, a voice suited for burlesque.

Magawley would soon see her opinion vindicated. Taylor's exalted expectations concerning Webb ("His Genius will a Thousand generous Youths inspire") proved ill-founded, for with publication of *Batchelors-Hall* in 1731 Webb's brief literary career in Pennsylvania

ended. Taylor himself lapsed into four years of silence.  

During his creative hiatus, Taylor apparently became aware of another New World poet whose inspiration and influence would be all that Taylor had hoped for Webb—Richard Lewis, Latin Master of Annapolis. Lewis’s masterpiece, “A Journey from Patapsco to Annapolis,” appeared in the Pennsylvania Gazette a mere fourteen days after Magawley’s satire appeared in the American Weekly Mercury. Lewis’s poem would be widely reprinted in the colonies and England. It would stand as the principal statement of high neoclassicism, giving voice to the newly developing physico-theological image of nature and binding that image to the philosophical personalism of Thomson’s “Winter.”  

That Lewis’s poem impressed Taylor cannot be doubted, for the old poet paid “The Journey” the unusual homage of composing a long imitation. Too long for inclusion in an almanac, Taylor published his imitation under the pseudonym, “Enroblos”—“rusty”—in Bradford’s paper. (The pseudonym may be a play on Taylor’s name.) It was an experiment, in which Taylor recast his characteristic themes—the transformation of the wilderness, the role of Philadelphia to preside over a New World empire, the role of Pennsylvania as an asylum for the oppressed of the world, the many benefits of the landscape—in the polished neoclassical style of Lewis. He borrowed several of Lewis’s images and attempted analogues. He imitated Lewis’s adroit way of handling antitheses. Yet the neoclassical dress could not disguise the characteristic patterns of Taylor’s thought. Beneath the polish one finds a Protestant contentiousness, the seventeenth-century love of anatomies and lists, and the fascination with curiosities.

Enroblos /Jacob Taylor

Reading a few Years ago a Poem in one of the New’s Papers, entituled, a walk from Annapolis to Potapsco. It furnish’d me with a Hint, whereupon I have digested the following, which however deficient to that Piece, may if you think proper, be inserted in your New’s Papers,

O Heavenly Muse my daring Breast inspire,  
With sacred Warmth and with celestial Fire,  
Thee I implore to whom all Power belong,  
God is my Theme do thou assist my Song

22 Breintnall remarked of Taylor’s silence, “Has thy long Silence made thee stupid seem?/Thou nod’st sometimes, but some forever dream / Does any man traduce thee, let him rise,/He knows thee not, or envies one more wise ” Pennsylvania Gazette (6 Jan, 1735/36)

23 J. A. Leo Lemay, Men of Letters in Colonial Maryland (Knoxville, 1972), 126-84
Here where so late a Wilderness was found,
Where Rocks, and Trees, and Shrubs o'er spread the Ground,
Where all the Wild, of Human art bereft.
Bearing that Form which long the Flood had left.

But in the thicket now no dread appears,
Produces Terror, or begets our Fears:
The craggy Rock, nor fenny Brake now shew,
No monstrous Brood, that may beget our woe;
Instead of Wilds, the watry Springs abound,
Through mazes wind, and fertilize the Ground:
The gloomy Thicket now a lawn is seen,
And different Herbage deck'd in various green;
The Oak and Wallnut fell'd, which thickest grew,
The Sun again beholds the Earth anew;
The gleby Soil enliven'd with his Beams,
Her pregnant Womb with mighty increase teems,
Whence Store of Grain the labour'd Field contains,
Which amply pays the Labourer his pains.

Oppressed Nations here * for safety throng,
From lawless Rage, and from vindictive Wrong:
Here Britains safe do n'er with dread surprize,
Sink under Taxes or foresee Excise.
The painful Belgian can securely sleep,
Nor dreads the dangers of th' uncertain deep:
Distressed Germans here secure of Right,
Fear not the force of titulary might:
No Gallick Armies can their Peace molest,
Destroy their Harvest or disturb their Rest:
The Hungry, Needy, and oppress'd with Ill,
Here seek thy Aid, and wait upon thy Will.
Here thou in safety dost their Substance keep,
And mak'st them Households like a flock of Sheep.

As Providence can many ways supply
The naked's want, and help the need'y's cry,
Can by ten thousand Means asswage our grief,
And send us aid where least we think relief:
In full reliance on this power divine,
I banish Grief, each anxious Thought resign,
All fear of want and dread of ills forego,
And only be solicitous to know.
Early at dawn of Day from Bed I rose,
And for my mornings Walk the Orchard chose,
Blossoms in many Colours please the Sight,
The Peach in Red, the Apple cloath'd in White,
The ambient Air with sweet effluvias fill'd,
To please the Sense does greatful odours yield;
Cherries of various kind transplanted grow,
Retain their Flavours and with beauties glow:

Not so the Plumb, which tho' preserv'd with care,
Loves not the Soil or starveth in the Air;
Whilst the Luxuriant Peach array'd in State,
Prospers and Thrives without reflected Heat;
In thirty Months a Tree, the Kernel grows,
And Man and Beast its bounteous Produce knows.
Nature in every soil does favours show'r,
On some peculiar Tree, or Shrub, or Flower,
By numerous ways Art would this secret gain,
But fruitless strives and her efforts are vain.

The Sun exalted now whose Beams give birth,
To endless Shapes and animates the Earth:
With speed the Reptile kind forsake their Dens,
And seek the Banks, or float among the Fenns;
The water Snake in green or reddish dress,
For Strength much noted but for Courage less;
The black Snake active, vigorous and strong,
Bold to attack but yet unblam'd for wrong;
With these the garter Snakes regardless are,
As these want Power the first has too much fear;
Unlike the heavy Viper's various race,
DifPring in Colours, all of tardy pace,
Flat headed all, alike for Mischief found,
Fearless to bite, and dreadful in their Wound.
But see the haughty Rattle Snake appear,
Whose very looks command an awful fear,
Of ample Size, Majestick, Great and Strong,
And slow Pursuit he proudly moves along,
Whose Bite, by sad Effects, we're sure to find,
The most malignant of the reptile Kind.
And now ye reasoning Bards who dare maintain,
By Philosophic Rules ye can explain,
Such latent Causes, here my query take,
And solve it plainly for your Credit's sake
How Rattle Snakes, Frogs, Fowls, and Birds can charm,
The Victim flies to death nor dreams of harm?
Alas I doubt my Question will recur,
Impotent Bards will to this Truth demur
They must demur, nor can the Cause be found,
By those who knew no Cure against his Wound

NOW whilst through diff'rent Paths I walk along,
The Notes of Birds contribute to my Song,
Whose various species and whose diff'rent kind,
By strictest search is hard I own to find
By one Name only many sorts they call,
And many others, have no Name at all,
Of all the smaller Tribe, the Wren alone
In Britain's Isle, I heretofore have know
But what is He, * who perch'd above the Rest,
Pours forth such various Musick from his breast,
Supreme of Birds, who drest in sober grey,
In notes harmonious, ushers in the Day,
Unblest with nat'rall Songs, yet learns from all,
At once their Copy, and Original
With wonder next the Humming Bird behold,
Deck'd in gay Colours, burnish'd o'er with Gold,
Not Juno's fav'rite Bird appears so fine,
Nor Iris self when most her Beauties shine,
Whilst in a Garden, thick with Flowers set,
Hovering he lights, their Honey dew to get,
Ten thousand hues reflect upon our sight
And blaze on blaze, administer delight
At ev'ry instant such bright Rays expand,
As must elude the greatest Painter's Hand,
All nature's Pow'r collected here we find,
To deck the Smallest of the Feather'd kind

And now I straitway traverse o'er the Fields,
Observant of the Soil, and what it yields,
What tho' the Mead, nor Sunny Bank disclose,
Such various Flowers as in Britain grows
Cowslips and Daises, tho' the Soil n'er bears,
Tho' the pale Violet nought of flavour wears,
Tho' the rathe Primrose, nor the Oxlip's seen,
Tho' the Fields bears no dress but diff'rent Green; 125
In lieu of Pleasure to one Sense deny'd,
May not another be Ten-fold supply'd
Here the kind Sun, the fertile Soil ferments,
Gives birth to Plants of aromack Scents.
A new Creation here we may descry,
Upon whose Surface mighty Wonders lye,
Botanic Tribes of ample Size appear,
Expanded breathe, and beautify the Year.
The Herbarist in vain, to Books applys,
Each leaf revolv'd, a true portrait denies,
Artists unborn their kinds, and Powers shall shew,
And Realms unpeopled yet, these blessings know.

Nor shall the Medick art on Plants rely,
Here Trees, and Shrubs, contribute large supply,
Of healing Balm, and Gums with Odours fill'd,
Thro' Tubes exhal'd, and by the Clime distill'd.
The humble Spikenard here his Branches spreads,
And there peruvian Balm its Essence sheds.
The Storax sweet, majestick, great and Tall,
At ev'ry Chasm lets useful Rosin fall,
But Oh! what Wonders in my Bosom lye,
When I the various Turpentines descry,
From the high Pines, which North West Wind commands
To humble Cedar growing in the Sands
A numerous Tribe, artless, great nature's Pride,
And as with Names, with virtues great supply'd.
Blest with its shade, I near some Harbour stand,
And View a Ship, arrive from foreign Land;
Soft Gales a-baft the Crew's dread fears destroy,
And I methinks participate their Joy
When lo a Western Gust invades my Ear,
And thick black Clouds foretell a Tempest near:
The Winds loud roreings all the Forrest shakes,
And frightful Nature in convulsions quakes.
Quick uncontroll'd it leaves the open Fields,
But to its Fury soon the Forrest yields.
Wallnuts, and Oaks, and Chestnuts all around,
In dreadful heaps, bestrew th'uneven Ground,
Their former Stength is now their Ruin found.
The pliant Pine alone survives the blast,
Its bending boughs preserve his Body fast,
The Gust past o're —Yet still my Care remains,
I watch the bark, behold their Care and Pains,
The Sails they furle, and now the Winds whole force,
Oblige for Safety that they change their Course
To Sea again they Steer, but strait the Gale
Robe every Mast, and blows away the Sail
The Masts now bare withstand the raging Storm,
By those alone they Scud secure of harm
At length she's safe—my Journey I pursue,
And oft the Pine with secret Wonder view,
Adore that GOD whose Wisdom made the Tree,
And gave me Pow'r his wond'rous Works to see

+ Thus whilst the Heavens and Firmament on high,
And Orbs in boundless space that distant live,
Duly revolve, and constant to each Clime,
Give Day and Night and measure out the Time
Here on this little Ball, this grain of Sand,
Of small extent in th' hollow of thy Hand,
The whole Creation, in one Voice combine,
To tell the Hand that made them is Divine

Pleas'd with the Thought, revolving in my mind,
The wondrous ways which Providence assign'd,
Whereby at First we gain'd the prosp'rous Land,
Untook by Gallick or Hesperian Hand
The many Dangers of an unknown Shore,
The hidden Rocks and Shoals unplum'd before
Pale Hunger, Sickness from contagious Air,
Quarrels and Faction, breeders of despair,
Besides the Terror of a Savage Line,
Careless for Laws, or Rule, or pow'r Divine

Pass we now by, scarce three times Fifty Years,
The Danger's vanish'd and forgot the Fears
In peace the Indian leaves his former home,
Content with Lakes or over Hills to roam
The noxious Air no more in Prison pent,
The Sun exhalès, or wholesome Winds give vent,
None now complain the want of Food he knows,
Since Grain abundant in each Province grows

The Spanish Southren Realms not thus begun,
By Blood and Rapine all their Lands were won,

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Mean subtle Tricks their crafty #Gen'ral try's,
To force adds fraud, and bold presumptuous lies:
Hot-headed Priests too, full of fiery Zeal,
Now force Religion for the Indian's weal;
But whilst they Preach, a pow'r Supreme on high,
A God whose dwellings are above the Sky,
Their Adoration tells, He surely shines,
With greatest Lustre in their Indian Minds.

Now rich in Gold, with Pride and Power blown,
The Spanish Monarh dreams the World his own,
To Britains Isle, a warlike *Navy flies,
The Monarch wholly on his Strength relyes,
Nor thinks that Pow'r nor Justice can withstand,
The Potent owner of a golden Land:
But ruling Providence which looks o'er all,
Gives Princes Wealth to complicate their fall,
By wondrous ways o'er threw this mighty host,
Some sunk in Fight some stove upon the Coast,
And for this haughty and presumptious Deed,
In her enternal Records thus Decreed,
That that same Pow'r that rules the watry Main,
Shall when they please, Subdue insulting Spain,
By Fire and Arms retake the golden Ore,
Which they by Rapine had obtain'd before.

Not gain'd by Blood, nor took by conq'ring Bands,
Healthy and Prosp'rous PHILADELPHIA stands,
Design'd for Empire, fittest for Command,
Built in the Center of a fruitful Land.
Thou great Asylum, safe from lawless Foes,
Where Liberty in full Perfection glows:
As long as Winds may blow or Oceans rowl,
Safe may'st thou Stand, and Trace from Pole to Pole.
And there O ALLEN may'st thou Treasure find,
Ev'n Great and Boundless like thy gen'rous Mind.

*Pennsylvania
#Psalm 107, ver. 41.
*Mocking Bird
§Psalm 19, v. 1, 2, 3. &c.
#Cortes,
Invincible Armado in Queen Elizabeth’s Reign. 24

The stark contrast drawn between Spanish greed and Pennsylvania’s peaceful satisfaction with its bounty reflects the colonial worry over depredations of British shipping by Spanish privateers—a concern that would in 1742 fuel the expedition against Carthage. Taylor’s interest in trade is rendered personal in the closing benediction addressed to William Allen, the merchant who served as the principal patron of poetry in Philadelphia from 1722 to 1753. Throughout the poem Taylor related economically peace and poetry; he argued that the New World supplied the wherewithal to provide a sufficiency for those who sought asylum from the old world. The refugees would constitute a new pastoral community: “Households like a flock of Sheep.”

Jacob Taylor died in 1746, the same year as Joseph Breintnall, having lived long enough to witness the transformation of Philadelphia from a settlement to a cosmopolitan center. During his life he enjoyed the trust of the most educated and powerful men in the colony. Upon his death, his rival in the almanac trade, Benjamin Franklin, composed his elegy:

But lo!-whats that I see appear?
It seems far off a pointed flame;
From Earthwards too the shining Meteor came:
How wift it climbs t'etherial Space! . . .
‘Tis He—‘tis TAYLOR’s Soul, that travels there.

Poor Richard: 1748.

24 The American Mercury, 1051, 1052 (19 Feb, 26 Feb, 1739/40) Lemay, 557 The poem can be seen as an elaboration of Taylor’s reflection on the resources of Pennsylvania contained in his 1738 almanac. The argument on behalf of making Philadelphia the seat of a New World empire echoes the opening passage of the almanac poem. The anti-Spanish and anti-French sentiments parallel the running verse over the monthly calendars in the 1742 almanac. The remarks concerning the peaceful supplanting of the Indians would be refined into the “Indian Prophecy” of 1743. The passage on fruit trees prefigures the apple tree’s speech in the almanac for 1744. And the scriptural subtext of line 36 marks Taylor’s increasing interest in grounding his poetry in the Bible. See the almanacs for 1740 and 1741. None of the other known neoclassical bellettrists displayed the inclination to employ biblical subtexts. The only other likely candidates for authorship are the Quaker polemicist and surveyor Benjamin Eastburn and the mysterious Chester County writer, “Runs Amator”, no known verses from Eastburn’s pen are known to survive—though he seems to have written for the lost Boucher almanacs published in Philadelphia during the 1730s. No known poems by Runs Amator date from after 1736, so he, too, is not so likely a candidate as Taylor.
George Webb. The frustration of George Webb’s desire to be the American champion of neoclassicism is the most curious episode in the literary history of early Pennsylvania. His career possesses a moral interest, much as Richard Savage’s does for the history of Augustan England. It reveals the peril of the poetic temperament. Franklin’s account of Webb’s arrival in America—one of the more familiar digressions in the Autobiography—highlights the characterological flaw: Webb was incapable of fixing his mind on any project.

As a boy in Gloucester, Webb had distinguished himself as a scholar and school wit. He obtained a place at Balliol College, Oxford. As an undergraduate he lost his taste for study, becoming enamored of the stage. He withdrew his quarterly tuition, “hid his Gown in a Furz Bush,” and walked to London in the hope of joining an acting company. Con men bilked him of his money; the actors rejected him; and he starved. He signed a crimp’s bill for relief, indenturing him for service in the New World. Transported to Philadelphia, he avoided informing his English friends of his fate.

Philadelphia presented a second opportunity to make something of himself. Like Aquila Rose a decade earlier, Webb’s talent attracted the attention of educated and powerful men. He joined the Junto, Franklin’s company of ambitious young men. Presbyterian merchant and patron William Allen took an interest in him, convincing him to reactivate his interest in writing verse. Lt. Gov. Patrick Gordon was a recipient of his first efforts. His future seemed assured when a lady (identity unknown) paid for his release from his indenture to printer Samuel Keimer. Liberty led quickly to license. His first act of freedom was to betray a trust. Benjamin Franklin was the victim of the betrayal.

/ Webb/ came to offer himself as a Journeyman to us. We could not employ him, but I foolishly let him know, as a Secret, that I soon intended to begin a Newspaper, and might then have Work for him. My Hopes of Success as I told him were founded on this, that the only Newspaper, printed by Bradford was a paltry thing, wretchedly manag’d, and no way entertaining; and yet was profitable to him. I therefore thought a good Paper could scarcely fail of good Encouragement. I requested Webb not to mention it, but he told it to Keimer, who immediately, to be beforehand with me, published Proposals for Printing one himself, on which Webb was to be employ’d.\(^{25}\)

Since Webb belonged to Franklin’s Junto, and since the laws of that organization forbade members from revealing a colleague’s projects, Webb doubly violated his trust. This sacrifice of loyalty to ambition would inaugurate a pattern of behavior that would eventually lead to Webb’s downfall.

Webb’s ambitions were not restricted to the quest for fortune. When Elizabeth Magawley treated Webb in “The Wits and Poets of Pennsylvania,” she ridiculed Webb’s literary aspirations pointedly. Webb’s muse did not convey what the gods condescended to give; rather, she stormed the heavens to obtain the gods’ tidings.

Shew next, the Muse hath Rang’d the distant Spheres,
And when the Gods were speaking cocked her Ears;
Heard the decrees of Thunder-flinging Jove,
And then came back, and told Us all for Love:
Twas Georges Muse rang’d this untrodden Track,
W/eb/b! Who like Bantoff’s fam’d for the best Hack;

In the past this passage has been taken to be a general condemnation of Webb’s poetic aspirations. It is, however, a paraphrastic satire of a particular verse which appeared in the Pennsylvania Gazette on April 8, 1731, over the initials, “T.Z.” “T.Z.”/George Webb’s poem was the culminating verse in a series he composed developing the doctrine of the *translatio studii* and advancing the myth that Philadelphia was the New Athens. His first poem appeared in the July 3, 1729, issue of the *American Weekly Mercury*; his second was composed shortly thereafter and served as the head verse for the months in Titan Leed’s *Almanac for 1730*. The culminating poem appeared in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* 125 (April 8, 1731), a month before Magawley published her satire. Taken together, Webb’s three poems constitute the most thoroughgoing and eloquent presentation of the theme of America’s rising glory to be found prior to the publication of Bishop Berkeley’s “Verses on the Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America” (1752) and Rev.

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26 The poem is unsigned. It can be identified as Webb’s by his identity formula, “the officious muse,” which is echoes in the T.Z. poem of April 8, 1731. Lemay first noted the common authorship of the poems in his *Calendar of American Poetry*, 23, 32

27 C. Lennart Carlson first argued that Webb was author of this poem in “Samuel Keimer, A Study in the Transit of English Culture to Colonial Pennsylvania,” *PMHB*, 61 (Oct., 1937), 379. Lemay confirmed the attribution by discovering an identification of the poem as Webb’s in *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, XXIII (Aug., 1753), 372
James Sterling’s *An Epistle to the Hon. Arthur Dobbs* (1752).  

Webb’s literary debut was auspicious. For four months prior to Webb’s appearance in *The American Weekly Mercury*, the poetic contributions to the gazette had been dominated by the verse of “Damon,” a self-pitying newcomer to Pennsylvannia. “Damon” shared the unpolished musings of his verse diary with the reading public and provoked the contempt of Philadelphia’s men of taste. Satires circulated. By June of 1729 Damon had taken to complaining about the constraints placed on converse between the sexes, then the inhospitality shown his muse by local poets. He threatened to leave the province. Damon’s final verse appeared in the issue in which Webb made his greeting to the reading public. Webb took care to avoid Damon’s self-gratulation of his pique.

WEBB makes Philadelphia the source of his inspiration. He indicates that he is not bringing art to the New World himself but merely recognizes that it has already arrived.

*Rendezvous* at length she finds, has ventured o’er,
And Arts can flourish on Columbus Shore:
But chiefly You the coming Goddess own,
’Tis Philadelphia most welks her Throne;
With genuine Wit here every Bosom glows,
And different thoughts express in polish’d Prose.

So far in his verse Webb has not risen about convention; to praise the *genius loci* is the duty of any poet who would be resident of a place. Webb, however, goes beyond convention, offering an argument that explains why Philadelphia shall stand exalted in the arts.

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29 “Damon’s” first poem, an elaboration of an incident from Theocritus entitled, “Cupid Wounded,” appeared on April 3, 1729. Subsequent verses appeared on June 12, June 26, and July 3.
Go on brave Soul, out-rival Ancient Greece
Or Rome, or Britain's Selt in Arts of Peace,
Your happy Land can only hear from far,
Of Threatened Terrors, and Impending War;
For none shall dare disturb your peaceful Plain
In Gordon's Government, or GEORGE's Reign (lines 21-26).

Webb here has projected the formulaic designation for the fine arts, "the arts of peace," into a definition of the condition requisite for the existence of the arts: in order for there to be a flourishing of the arts, there must be peace. Distanced from the tumults of Europe, Pennsylvania enjoys the favor of the gods.

Here Themis loves to have her Altars blaze,
And willing grants, whate'er her Votary prays,
Not so, where the loud Trumpet, ever Sounds
Where War and Desolation, Stalk around,
The Goddess fires th' unhospitable Ground.
Hence 'twas that 'erst She sought Arcadia's Plains,
And taught the sacred Arts to Rural Swains.

Webb's allusion to the myth of Arcadia suggests that Pennsylvania's distance from Europe also betokens the country's remove from urbane luxury. In the rural countryside of Pennsylvania, poetic swains can be nurtured in the moral designs of nature. Webb anticipates the doctrine laid out by Bishop Berkeley: Arts will thrive "In happy climes the seat of innocence,/ Where nature guides and virtue rules."

In a coda to his verse, Webb offers a prophecy—first fruit of his inspiration by Themis.

E'er Time has Measured out an hundred Years
Westward from Britain, shall an Athens rise,
Which soon shall bear away the learned Prize;
Hence Europe's Sons assistance shall implore,
And learn from her, as she from them before.

Webb's prophecy entailed a conceptual flaw. He foretold a hundred years of rising glory in the "arts of peace" but had linked the mainte-

30 At precisely the time Webb was advancing the claims of Philadelphia's worthiness of future glory on the grounds of peace, the one poet who had moved from Pennsylvania to England—James Ralph—was arguing the opposite. Night: A Poem (London, 1728), 3-15, questions whether the New World could supply refuge from the patterns of disruption and violence implanted in the very design of nature.
nance of peace with the personal rule of Gordon and King George II, neither of whom could be expected to live fifty years, much less a century. Webb realized the flaw in his thinking and designed his second verse to correct it. Rather than link the "arts of peace" with the peace-keeping of specific rulers, Webb offered a political explanation for Philadelphia's future glory. Penn's "Charter of Liberties"—the document which insured popular self-government for the province—would be the warrant for enduring peace.

No Unjust Sentence we have cause to fear,
No Arbitrary Monarch rules us here;
Our Lives, our Properties, and all that's Ours,
Our happy Constitution here secures
What Praise and Thanks, O Penn, are due to thee!
For this first perfect Scheme of Liberty.

Webb's rhetoric recalls the title of Penn's most enticing vision of the life to be had in Pennsylvania, *The Excellent Privilege of Liberty and Property* (1687). And Webb pays the late founder of Pennsylvania tribute even greater:

Who can the Charter read, but with surprise
Must strait Proclaim thee Generous, Just and Wise?
Through every Page, thro' every careful Line,
How does the Friend, the Nursing-Father shine!

Praise for the first Proprietor and the special emphasis on peace as the precondition for art no doubt pleased readers among the Quaker party. Yet the other communities in Pennsylvania were served also. Webb's constitutionalism would please the merchants and paper-money men whose leader was Andrew Hamilton and whose strength lay in the Assembly. By combining the myth of the founder with a constitutional theory of Philadelphia's rising greatness, the broad range of educated opinion could endorse Webb's oracle that "Europe shall mourn her ancient Fame declin'd,/ And Philadelphia be the Athens of Mankind."

Webb's final treatment of his theme was written late in March of 1731. He previewed the verse in a meeting of the Junto, and Nicholas Scull commented upon the performance in the second of two verses

31 The celebration of William Penn as inaugurator of Pennsylvania's liberties would remain a prominent feature of Pennsylvanians poetry in later decades, receiving its most notable elaboration in Rev. William Smith's *A Poem on visiting the Academy of Philadelphia, June 1753* (Philadelphia, 1753), 7.
dedicated to the club. (Scull gives Webb the pseudonym, Oldham, a jibe at Webb’s past as an aspiring actor, Scull also alludes to John Oldham, author of the most notable satire on the worth of a college education composed during the Restoration)

Young Oldham now in flowing numbers sings
Britania happy in the best of Kings
How her great Monarch by judicious care
Has gained a peace without the cost of war
that with a nod from his Imperial throne
Contending nations lay their arms down

Scull ignored the American content of Webb’s verse, concentrating on the portrait of King George II. This emphasis suggests how sensitive Pennsylvanians were to the peace policy the king had promoted since his ascension to power in 1727. With Walpole marshalling Parliament on behalf of peace and the Quadruple Alliance governing external affairs, England would enjoy a pacific interlude lasting until 1742. For Philadelphians this meant undisturbed trade, minimal tax, and an opportunity to expend resources and attention upon the domestic scene.

Webb, however, was not exclusively absorbed in British affairs. Rather, he wished to portray the benefits that would accrue to Philadelphia from the policies of the current leaders of both Britain and the province. In short, Webb was returning to the panegyric mode of his first verse, praising living persons—persons whose good will could translate into patronage.

The rhetoric of this final vision of the New Athens strains with Webb’s ambition. The circumstance is an inspired voyage to “the right Mansions of almighty Jove.” In the divine company he overhears the gods determine the fate of nations, particularly their “tenderest care,” Britain. The gods assure Britain that the mortality of its leaders matters little, since “They King and Queen shall quit their low abodes/ And mount, and mingle with their kindred Gods.”

“T Z” /George Webb/
/Philadelphia/

NO more a willing Muse her Aid bestows,
My Verse inglorious as my Fortune grows,
Yet still my Bosome heaves, and still I long
To rouze my Genius, and improve my Song

32 Anon, “Nicholas Scull’s ‘Junto’ Verses,” The Library (Jan, 1949), 84
Thou sacred Father of the tuneful Nine,
For once my Breast inspire, my Thoughts refine,
And make my Numbers like Yourself divine.

See, see, the Delian God his Poet owns,
Shakes heavenly Domes, and bows celestial Thrones;
Himself descends to guide the sounding Lays,
And crown his favourite with immortal Bays:
Let all who hope to tread the Laureat Grove
Applaud the Youth whom Phoebus designs to love;
But oh! you Grov'lers round Parnassus, you,
A while withdraw, at awful Distance view,
Nor touch the Mountain lest the God break through.

The Song begins, and all inspir'd I rove
O'er the bright Mansions of almighty Jove;
Great as a God, from Orb to Orb I stray,
And tread with daring Steps, th' Olympick Way
Adorn'd with Suns, and Stars, and Light and endless Day.
High o'er the rest Heaven's great Pantheon stands,
The Dadal Work of Mulciberian Hands:
Description might amuse, but nothing shew,
For heavenly Fanes are not like Fanes below:
'Tis hence the Deity Mankind controlls,
The Lightning vibrates, and the Thunder rolls.

'Twas here I saw the sacred Council sat,
Weighing of Kingdoms in the Scales of Fate;
'Till the great Thunderer rising from his Chair
Thus spoke, "O Powers, O Dominations hear;
Genies, and Demi-Gods, attentive prove,
And learn the firm Resolves of Fate and Jove:
Mean time the Hills were shook, the Mountains nod,
And Heaven, and Earth, confess'd the speaking God.
Who thus went on; See how contending Powers
Hesperian Realms disturb, Italian Towers:
Yet soon the Clarion shall be made to cease,
Since GEORGE, and CAROLINA, call for Peace;
They more than we o'er Europe's Weal preside,
And Fortune follows where they please to guide:
Happy the Land on which the Royal Pair
Their choicest Hours employ, their tendrest Care.
O Britain, greatly bless'd! dismiss thy Fears,
For tho' 'tis true in long revolving Years
Thy King and Queen shall quit their low abodes
And mount, and mingle with their kindred Gods:
Yet from their Influence shall fresh Blessings flow,
And still their Offspring shall protect below.
Or say that Time brings on the distant Day,
When present Empires like the past decay,
And even Europa's Glory melts away;
Tho' far, far West, beneath the setting Sun
Shall Heroes rise, and mighty Deeds be done;
Yet round thy Temples shall fresh Laurels twine,
Favourite of all the Gods! but chiefly mine!
Still shall thy dreaded Fleets triumphant fall
To aid thy Friends, or o'er thy Foes prevail;
Tho' distant Kingdoms rise, yet every Throne
Shall bow to Thee, and Thee the Parent own.
See then, exculting see, already Fame
Begins thy PHILADELPHIA to proclaim:
Scarce does thy own Augusta fairer seem,
And scarce thy Thames affords a nobler Stream;
The Sea can bring her, or her Land produce.
'Tis mine and Heaven's Resolve to make her great,
Be it thy Glory to concur with Fate,
And kindly nurse a while her Infant-State.
And ye Pow'rs tutelar, that shed around
Your various Favours on the teeming Ground,
Let this new land employ your utmost Care,
Let her the choicest of your Blessings share,
And in Columbus World the brightest Lawrel wear:
While thou rash Bard, (who thus presum'd to stray
O'er awful Gulphs, and tread the Milky Way,
Daring to listen what the Godheads say,)
Return to Earth, and let thy only Lays
Be tun'd to Songs of PHILADELPHIA's Praise;
This done, even thou perhaps mayst rise to Fame,
And spread thy own, with Pennsylvania's Name.
Thus spoke the God; when thrice it thundred loud,
And thrice attending Powers with awful Reverence bow'd.
And now would Philadelph' accept the Lay,
How gladly would the Bard, the God obey;
How oft transported sound the pleasing Theme;
And sing her Buildings, or her crystal Stream!
Bound o'er her Hills, or tread the flowery Vale,
Or in more lofty Strains her Patriots hail?
At least permit my Fancy now to rove,
I see the promis’d Hours already move,
And all her Glories hastening down from Jove
For this was GORDON chose from all Mankind,
And to the great intended Work assign’d,
Heaven saw his Worth, and knew his Guardian Care,
Would gently lead along the tender Fair,
Which he has well perform’d, and now she shines
Bright as Bermudas seems in Waller’s Lines
(Tho’ there the Bard the Force of Numbers knew,
And paints ten Thousand Beauties more than true )
O GORDON! Thou who merits all our Praise,
Permit thy name to dignify my Lays
But who is He, from PHILADELPHIA’s Shore
Claims as her Son, yet long his Absence bore,
Who now to bless his native Land appears,
Of Wit and Judgment ripe, in blooming Years,
Yet of his Worth not conscious or elate,
Rich without Pride, without Ambition Great
’Twas He that rais’d my drooping Muse anew,
This Verse at least to Gratitude is due
I know he wants not me to chant his Fame,
Yet none can sure th’ officious Poet blame,
Who swells his humble Song with ALLEN’s Name
Hail all ye patriots, firm in Virtue’s Cause,
Gladly the Youth would pay deserv’d Applause,
But Pegasus no more the heat maintains,
See the tir’d Courser pants in ary Plains
Yet he refresh’d gain my stretch the Wing,
And I once more attempt the sounding String
So you descend to hear me while I sing

One does not need to count lines to see that Webb’s heart has changed from the praise of the city to the praise of powerful men in this verse. The growing “Fortune” mentioned at the poem’s outset has disposed Webb’s thought toward a more calculating treatment of his theme. Perhaps poetry could assist in that fortune’s further growth.

Webb’s final poetic composition to appear before the public in

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33 T Z [George Webb], [Philadelphia], The Pennsylvania Gazette, 125 (8 April, 1731) Lemay, 182
Pennsylvania was Batcheller's Hall, the work by which he is known to posterity. The circumstance of the poem is odd. Webb, a member of the Junto, is writing a defense of what clearly is another club, addressed to the local arbiters of taste and morals. It is now known that the club in question was a society formed by the sons of the wealthy merchant class. Several members—Griffin Owen, Lloyd Zachary, Isaac II and Charles Norris—were scions of the Quaker party. The club had constructed a meeting house on the banks of the Delaware; the building had stimulated suspicions that rural debaucheries would be performed there. Batchelor's-Hall refuted the suspicions. No “midnight reveals” nor “impious doctrines” would taint the club’s noble dome. The Batchelors had sought “nobler purposes”: “To cheer the soul and cultivate the mind.”

Webb had Franklin print the poem. The issue was small and apparently given gratis to influential people in the province. The defense did not forestall the Quaker meeting from taking action against the club in summer of 1731. Webb, too, seems to have suffered from his actions. The reputation garnered from his verse on the New Athens was forfeited by such a blatant play for favor. Magawley observed,

   a second Heat he try'd,
   And soar'd its true; but with a lessen'd Pride.
   Some say he got a most confounded fall,
   And snapt a Leg in two, against the Hall;
   Which the Chimeroans seeing eas'd his Pain
   By Paper Stampt, and sat all right again.

Webb not only suffered disfavor in some (presumably Quaker) circles, he seems to have experienced a financial setback. The “Paper Stampt” that the Chimeroans gave was money; and since the issue of paper money defined the party lines in Philadelphia politics, we can decode to the verse. It indicates that the paper money party—the party of Andrew Hamilton—was buying back Webb after his overture to the young Quaker anti-Hamiltonians. Who were the Chimeroans? If we adopt Jacob Taylor’s use of the word Chimera, meaning a fiction, it suggests the group of Hamiltonians given to writing fictions: i.e., the Junto.

At this juncture Webb’s career in Philadelphia ended. The poet whom Taylor saw as the champion of neoclassicism in the New World,
a poet who had promised to sound the Praise, to “sing her Buildings, or her crystal Stream” abandoned the city he called the “New Athens”. Why? Circumstances suggest that his fortune was balked by his actions in the spring of 1731. He had forfeited the favor of the conservative Quakers with Batchelor’s-Hall, had proven himself a changeable ally to the Hamiltonians, and may have lost his job as a journeyman printer with the failure of David Harry’s shop. At any rate, he departed for Charleston in summer of 1731 to set up a press and establish himself as public printer. He died before the year was over, victim of one of Charleston’s autumnal fevers.35

Posterity has contented itself with the portraits provided by Franklin and Magawley; for Franklin, Webb was an emblem of poetic pathology—the educated man with a psychic inclination of disloyalty; for Magawley he was the prince of hacks—a man whose ambition led to a great fall. To these portraits must be added a third impression: he was the first major prophet of the neoclassical vision of America’s rising glory.

Before Webb wrote, the translatio studii had a decidedly Christian cast in America. True Religion, not learning and the arts, moved westward as the Old World gave itself up to corruptions. Bostonians and the saints of New Haven were building the New Jerusalem, not the New Athens. This Christian myth had a dialectic structure. In the words of George Herbert, “gold and grace did never yet agree,/ Religion alwaies sides with povertie.”36 Thus it was the poverty of the New World, not its wealth of commodity, which insured purity of religion. When the Church established itself in the New World, sin would come to dog it. “The Church shall come, and Sinne the Church shall smother.” The history which Herbert and New England’s saints

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36 I cite Herbert’s poem as a representative Reformed Christian statement because Cotton Mather employed it as an epigraph for his *Magnalia Christi Americana* and because New England had incorporated its dialectic thrust into its claim to being the New Jerusalem, couching its claim for preeminence within the self-mortification of the jeremiad. Though colonial Philadelphians knew and cited Herbert’s poem—Jacob Duche in *Observations on a Variety of Subjects, Literary, Moral and Religious* (Philadelphia, 1774) for instance—Penn’s millenarian vision in *Some Account of the Province of Pensilvania* (1681) was better suited for syncretic elaborations of the neoclassic poets, for it made its claims of Pennsylvania’s preeminence without envisioning a dialectic peril. Penn conceived of his colony as that Fifth Monarchy predicted in the visions of Daniel, which would not pass away because it was firmly founded in God’s decrees. See J. William Frost, *William Penn’s Experiment in the Wilderness: Promise and Legend*, *PMHB* 107 (Oct., 1983), 581
envisioned was no simple progress; rather, it was a repeating conflict, enacted in successive epochs around the world. The title of Herbert's verse, "The Church Militant," pointed to the essential theme: pure religion existed only in an ongoing struggle with the world; the church endures only by repeatedly disavowing the "Empire and Arts" which attend its rise. Contrast Herbert's myth with Webb's vision of the New Athens. For Herbert the coming of empire and arts into the New World betokened the need to revive the struggles to keep religion pure; for Webb, the Arts would come to the New World, because only in America existed the Peace which permitted cultivation of "the Arts of Peace"—music, painting, poetry.

Whatever his failings as a man, Webb deserves recognition as the first major prophet of the America of Atheneums, civic temples, and "new Romans." He presented a vision of progress that saw America as the culmination of world history yet freed of the apocalyptic sublimities of Reformed Christianity. He was the dreamer who had the audacity to see a provincial town with a half dozen poets as the future mecca of world literature.

The unnamed poet. Readers of "The Wits and Poets" have assumed that in stanza eight Magawley rebukes Samuel Keimer, the eccentric printer who employed Franklin and Webb at various times. They cite the criticism Magawley makes of the unnamed poet's two styles:

But see! A Poet of another Tribe,
Stalks round Parnasus with a sullen Pride.
No Rhymer equal's him in false Sublime,
A Rumbling bombast loads the labouring Line:
Such in his Flights! But when his humbler Flame
Descends to common Sense, none write more plain;
With Sp-ws and Sh-tes he stuffs the savoury Song,
And Beatle like, seems mighty fond of Dung.

Scholars have reasoned that Keimer was intended because his religious works, The Brand Plucked From the Burning for instance, evinced the false sublime, while his almanac verse, "Dr. Water" in the Taylor Almanac for 1726 for instance, contained scatalogical elements. Two things, however, argue against Keimer being the author Magawley intended: Keimer was no longer present in Philadelphia when Magawley's poem was written, having sold his failed business to David Harry and left for Barbados. Keimer was well known to the reading
public of Philadelphia, so he should have been named by Magawley, who names all her other "wits." Furthermore, Magawley remarks that the poet is a "Poet of another Tribe"—a member of the anti-Hamilton faction. Keimer did not distinguish himself as such.

Another candidate for the unnamed poet is John Hughes, a Quaker philomath, surveyor, and poet who published almanacs in 1725, 1726, and 1727. He composed some conventional sublime verse on the movement of celestial bodies and the change of seasons for his almanacs, yet is most notable for a scabrous satire on Pennsylvania's pretensions to being a utopia. This 155-line poem in the 1726 almanac represents the various nationalities of colonists in terms of beasts, portraying their political contentions. Foremost among the beasts was "A Monster of Prodigious size,/ Part Wolf, part Fox,"—Andrew Hamilton. (The satire suggests that Hughes was the author of the anonymous polemic against Hamilton, *The Life and Character of a Strange He-Monster*, published in 1726).37 There are several scatalogical episodes in Hughes's satires. Yet there is reason to doubt whether Hughes is meant by Magawley. Hughes, too, attached his name to the satire in his almanac, so there is no reason for him to have gone unnamed in Magawley's verse.

Magawley's inability to supply a name suggests that the "groveller" at Parnassus may have been an anonymous author—one of that breed of gentlemen with an unsigned manuscript circulating among the public houses. Philadelphia during the 1730s was awash with unattributed writings. The practice of floating anonymous satires was so popular that Franklin was forced to declare that he would never publish any compositions lacking names. In 1739 a poet remarked of the anonymous versifiers,

> their bright shining, Franklin does eclipse,  
> By hoarding up their num'rous Manuscripts,  
> To their great Loss who take down-working Pills,  
> Kite-Makers, Pastry-Cooks and Paper-Mills. 38

One manuscript attack on Andrew Hamilton has survived from the

37 Walker Lewis has argued convincingly that Gov. Keith instigated the He-Monster attack on Hamilton, I am suggesting here that Hughes was Keith's penman. "Andrew Hamilton and the He-Monster," *William and Mary Quarterly* 38 (1981), 268-94.

38 [Joseph Breintnal?], "To the Memory of John Dommett, the unborn poet, lately deceased," *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 556 (9 Aug., 1739).
early 1730s, that composed by Isaac Norris, Jr., and preserved in his brother's manuscript book. Violently vituperative, slandering Hamilton's history, character, and policy, it never sank to scatology. So there is no unimpeachable candidate for the figure that Magawley has drawn in the eighth stanza. Until additional manuscripts come to light, or until someone discovers some clue to the poet's identity not now discernable, it will remain obscure.

**Henry Brooke.** Elizabeth Magawley closed her poem with an encomium to the talents of Henry Brooke. Those virtues which the other poets lacked—discipline, wit, decorum—Brooke possessed in great degree. For a long period scholars have been unable to affirm or disprove Magawley's assessment, for Brooke's writings were misplaced. Charles P. Keith alluded to manuscripts preserved among the Logan papers at Stenton; these have disappeared. And the one verse known to have been written by him, "A Discourse on Jests," was available only in brief excerpts published decades ago. Historians have tantalized themselves with imaginings about what his art might be, extrapolating from the details known about his life. Brooke was the grandson of a baronet. He was a polyglot with special expertise in the literatures of France and Italy as well as the classics. According to James Logan, Brooke possessed "the most polite education and best natural parts" of any man in the province, a beau gentleman who practiced letters among the modest citizens of Lewes, in Delaware. According to his memorial eulogy, he had a taste for natural philosophy: "No Science left unsearch'd, no Art could fly,/ Or scape the search" of his discerning eye. Brooke's abilities recommended him to public office. He rose from customs collector at Lewes to member of the Pennsylvania Council and Speaker of the Assembly for the Lower Counties (Delaware). Magawley's lines added to the life-long chorus of praise.

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40 The poem survives in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania Manuscript Collection, Case 19, Box 18. A product of Brooke's youth, it contains several themes repeated in his later verse on wit.
41 Brooke's library of Italian books survives as part of the collection of the Philadelphia Library Society.
42 Anon. [David French ?], "Verses, to the Memory of Henry Brooke, Esq," *The American Weekly Mercury*, 850 (15 April, 1736).
We have seen that Magawley supplies references or paraphrases of works she has in mind when reflecting upon an author. In this stanza the notable recurring element is the word “wit.” Of works published in Philadelphia during the decade previous to the appearance of “The Wits and Poets” there is a single verse composed “On Wit.” It appeared in Felix Leeds, *The American Almanack for 1727*. In the passage printed over the calendar for the month of September, we find the following lines: “Wit, like a Luxuriant Vine/ Unless to a Virtuous prop it joyn . . ./ It lies Deformed and Rotting on the Ground.” This is the image that Magawley has recast in her couplet, “As th’Awful Elm Supports the Purpling Vine,/ So round his Sense his sprightly Wit Entwines.” “On Wit” is a work on the mature Henry Brooke.

[Henry Brooke]

On Wit.

A Thousand Diff’rent Shapes it bears, January
Comely in Thousand shapes appears.
‘Tis not a Tale ‘tis not a Jest,’
Admir’d with laughter at a feast.
Nor florid Talk which can this Title gain:
The proofs of Wit for ever must remain.
‘Tis not to force some Lifeless Verses meet, February
With their Five gouty Feet;
All every where, like Mans must be the Soul,
And Reason the Inferiour Pow’rs countroul,
Yet ‘tis not to Adorne and Gild each part,
That shews more Cost than Art.
‘Tis not when two, like Words, make up a noise March
(Jests for Dutch men and English boys)
In which who Finds out Witts, the same may see,
In Anagrams and Acrostick Poetry;
Much less can that have any place,
At which a Virgin hides her Face,
Such Dross the Fire must Purge away.

———-'Tis Just, April
The Author Blush, there where the Reader must;
'Tis not such Lines as almost crack the Stage,
When Bajazet begins to Rage:
Nor a tall Methaphor in the Bambast way,
Nor the dry chips of short Lung'd Seneca,
Nor upon all things to intrude,
And force some odd Similitude.

What is it then, which like the Pow'r Divine,
We only can by Negatives Define,
In a true piece of Wit, all things must be;
Yet all things there agree.
As in the Ark, joynd without Force or Strife,
All Creatures dwelt; all Creatures that had Life.

Or as the Primitive Forms of all,
Which without Discord and Confusion die.
In that strange mirrour of the deity;
'Tis not a flash of Fancy, which sometimes
Dazling our minds, sets of the slightest Rhymes,
Bright as a Blaze, but in a moment done.
True Wit is everlasting, like the Sun.

True Wit, is Nature to advantage dress'd,
What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd;
Some thing, whose Truth convinc'd at first we find,
That gives us back the Image of our mind:
Unhappy Wit, like most mistaken Things,
Attones nor for that Envy which it brings,
In Youth alone, it's empty Praise we boast,
But soon that short liv'd Vanity is lost.

Like some fair Flower, the early Spring supplies,
That Gaily blooms, but even, in blooming dies;
What is this Wit, which most our Cares imploy?
The Owners Wise, that other Men enjoy?
That's most our Trouble, when the most admir'd;
The more we give, the more is still requir'd.
The Fame with Pains we gain, we lose with Ease,
Sure some to vex, but never all to Please.
'Tis what the Vicious fear, the Virtuous shun,
By Fools 'tis hatred, and by Knaves undone;
Wit, like a Luxuriant Vine
Unless to Virtuous prop it joyn,
Firm and erect toward Heaven bound,
Tho' it with Beauteous and pleasant Leaves be Crown'd;
It lies Deformed and Rotting on the Ground.
Wit, like Beauty, triumphs o'er the Heart,
When more of Nature's seen, and less of Art:
Wit, like Tierse Claret, when't begins to Pall,
Neglected lies and is of no use at all;
But in its full perfection of Decay,
Turns Vinegar, and comes again in play.
Unequally th' impartial Hand of Heav'n
Has all but this one only Blessing giv'n.
In Wit alone't has been Munivicent,
Of which so just a share to each is sent,
That the most Avarious are Content,
For none e'er thought (the due Division's such)
His own too little, or his Friends too much.
Great Wits are sure to Madness near ally'd
And then Partitions do their Bounds divide.
Great Wits and Valours, like great States,
Do sometimes Sink with their own weights,
Th' Extreams of Glory and of Shame,
Like East and West become the same;
No Indian Prince, has to his Palace
More foll'wers than a Thief to th' Gallows. 43

Brooke's verse partakes of the fascination with the issues of literary criticism that swept the literary circle of the English-speaking world after 1700. In the first decades of the eighteenth century the literary world was divided between men of sense (Blackmore, Dennis, Addison) and men of wit (Pope, Gay, Swift), with the consequent polemic attempts to define sense and nonsense, true wit and false wit. Brooke's poem begins with his own attempt at a discrimination between true wit and false. Sense can only discern what wit is not: mechanical verse, jest, bombast. Wit itself, however, can supply some positive sense of what

43 The authorship of the poem on the effects of the sun is indicated by the allusion made to the verse in stanza three of elegy of 1736.
wit's essence is. In a series of metaphors and similies, most of which are drawn from nature, Brooke explores wit's function, operation, and character. Individual insights are gathered from Pope's *Essay on Criticism* and Addison's *Spectator* essays, yet the monitory ending possesses Brooke's individual stamp. Here we see the moralist preaching moderation, as he did in "A Discourse of Jests" to his friend, Robert Grace; and here we see that literature, which is a vehicle for morality, possesses consequences for the state.

Did Brooke, who with his friend James Logan had the closest familiarity with the workings of the state of any man of letters in early Pennsylvania, have a political mythology for his New World homeland? Did he imagine some version of the *translatio studii*, or see the rising glory of the New Athens or New Rome? It seems he did. Brooke appears to have written two further poems in the period between 1727 and 1731: the physico-theological verse on the sun contained in the 1728 issue of Felix Leed's *The American Almanack*; and the following ode to Pennsylvania published in the fifth issue of Samuel Keimer's newspaper, *The Universal Instructor in all Arts and Sciences*: "Jack Careless" /Henry Brooke/

/Pennsylvania./

— Mihi parva Rura et
Spiritum Graiae Camaenae
Parca non mendax dedit & malignum
Spernere vulgus, Hor.
Huis & ipsa Roma viribus ruit. Hor.

TOO long have Party-Broils usurpt the Song,
And biting *Lyricks* held the Muse too long;
Now grave *Heroicks* shall my Soul expand
To sing the Praises of a happy Land.

On Western Strands remote from *British Isles*,
A rising Colony begirt with Smiles
Of Providence benign, commands our Lyre,
Rouses my Breast, and sets the Muse on Fire.

Hail Pennsylvania! hail! thou happy Land,
Where Plenty scatters with a lavish Hand:
Amidst the Woods we view the Friendly Vine,
With Purple Pride, spontaneously entwine;
Where various Cates arise without the Toil
Of labouring Hind, to cleave the stubborn Soil,
The skipping Deer in wild Meanders sport,
And Ceres, with Pomona, keep their Court
A Thousand winged Choristers delight
At once the list'ning Ear, and ravish'd Sight
Where free from Clouds we breath AEtherial Air,
And Sol keeps Holiday through the Year
Thy Sons are witty, and thy Daughters fair
A native Beauty does the Belles adorn,
Fair as the driven Snow, and ruddy as the Morn
View but Samorua, view the lovely Dame!
This you'll confess, nor think the Poet vain
The industrious Merchant braves the foaming Sea,
And thro' Ten Thousand Dangers cuts his Way,
To reach the happy Port, in hopes to share,
The World of Blessings ever flowing there
Judicious Foreigners with Ease espy,
The Guardian's Likeness in the Pupil's Eye,
Whilst on the smiling Colony they gaze,
They view Britannia in a wrapt Amaze
Our Speech so manly, smooth, and so concise,
To Troy Novant we scarcely yield the Prize,
When their Advantages with ours compare,
The blest Effects of so serene an Air!
Free from the posing Shackles of the Schools,
Kind Nature points the Theme, and shows the Rules
With softer Airs the panting Swain inspires,
To sooth his Pains, and fan up mutual Fires
Alas fond Man, ah whither wouldst thou run!
Wouldst write of Love again, and be undone?
Yet would Sarena kind and constant be!
Then Godlike Addison, I'd write like thee.

45 Of the attributions offered in this article, this is most open to doubt. Lines 38-39 restate a doctrine found in Brooke's poem on Wit, and we encounter yet again the metaphor of the supported vine in lines 11-12. This form of the metaphor more closely approximates the echo Magawley gives in "The Wits and Poets"—the elm is the support, the vines bear purple—Magawley seems to have taken an image from Horace's Fifteenth Ode, Book II—the piece immediately preceding the Ode which serves as epigraph for "Jack Careless's" poem. Franklin, who had a weakness for the odd work "cates", is the only other candidate I would put forward, yet the decorum of the verse does not suit Franklin's temper, as evidenced by his earliest surviving works.
We are disadvantaged reading Brooke’s poem in a way we were not in any of the other verses. The occasion of the poem is lost to us, though the references to ladies suggests the verse may have been composed for a rout or the meeting of a mixed sexes club. Because of the importance of the Latin epigraph for the poem’s argument, the verse was probably intended to be read rather than declaimed. Brooke seems to have been reacting to another local poem, now lost. Thus we are restricted to the general circumstance of his argument: the reply he makes to the sixteenth of Horace’s *Second Book of Odes*.

The ode is one of Horace’s major pieces devoted to the issue of contentment. His premise holds that peace in the world of affairs is less fundamental than individual peace of mind. Consequently one must limit peace-disturbing ambitions, rather than attempt to fulfill desires. The argument turns on a series of questions that Brooke, or any other intelligent colonist, would have found provocative: “Why hanker after countries/ Heated by foreign suns? What exile ever/ Fled his own mind?” As a final demonstration of his thesis, Horace testifies to his own contentment.

Fate, an honest patron,
Has given me a small farm, an ear fine-tuned to
The Grecian Muses, and a mind from vulgar
Envy aloof. 46

Brooke has taken the Latin original of these lines for his epigraph.

Brooke reverses the import of Horace’s testimony by appropriating it on behalf of life in Pennsylvania. Happiness has found its resort on the western strand. Here both the virtuous fruits of labor and the Grecian muses may be had, for Nature bestows its abundance freely and instructs the artist in his theme. Nature will also sponsor the improvement of natives of the New World over the citizens of the old. Critics had frequently noted that the *translatio studii* was a myth that stressed the affiliation of America with Europe, attesting America’s status as true offspring of Old World civilization. Yet the myth was no mere sop to American insecurity. As we have seen on several occasions, the myth was used aggressively. Foreigners might be amazed to see Britain radiating from America’s eyes; they will be dumbstruck when Philadelphians speak and reveal their truest ancestry: *Troy Novant*: Rome.

46 Michie, *The Odes of Horace*, 147.
Britain was an imperfect progenitor in Pennsylvania eyes. When the wits and poets proclaimed their affiliation to the Old World, they quickly bypassed Britain to speak of their true original—Rome, or Athens. Britain remained a presence in the myth only to the extent that it seems that beginning which must be surpassed. The rising glory of America would eclipse the old world’s light.

Brooke saw party contentiousness as that spore of Old Britain that might taint America’s development. British neoclassicism had its most vigorous expression in satire—in the ridiculing of contemporary vices. Thus the great works of British literature—the works of Pope, Swift, and Gay—testified to London’s inability to claim the virtues of Rome and Athens to itself. Brooke found that of the British writers only Addison presented a practical model for emulation. He alone forsook satire and the way of contentiousness. Brooke’s opinion would later be seconded by Benjamin Franklin.

Brooke’s ode incorporated all the characteristic themes that the wits of Philadelphia had formulated in connection with the myth of the New Athens. The ode argued, as Breintnall’s encomium to Rose had argued, that the eloquence of Pennsylvanians promised future glory in literature and civic arts. It insisted, as Taylor’s long imitation of Richard Lewis had insisted, that nature’s profusion would provide that sufficiency to the population that permits contentment. It indicated, as Webb’s several verses indicated, that peace would be the precondition of Philadelphia’s future greatness. And Brooke specified that peace must be manifested in the domestic political arena, if Pennsylvania were to become the sanctuary of world art.

* * *

We have seen how the ambitions of Pennsylvania’s wits and poets were remarkably coherent at the outset of the 1730s. Magawley alone demurred from the general tendency to mythologize Philadelphia’s future. Her reservations would prove well founded. The peace the wits longed for so avidly would never come about. In time their myth would be distorted by versifying imperialists—Dr. Adam Thomson and Provost William Smith—who argued that Philadelphia’s rising glory depended on martial spirit and English cultural hegemony in the New World.47 Boston would eventually claim to be “the New Athens.” And

47 Philomusaeus, [Dr. Adam Thomson], “An Ode, humbly inscribed to the Associates of Pennsylvania,” Pennsylvania Gazette (1 Sept., 1748).
the *translatio studii* would become diffused in its applications, being used to explain the rising glory of American rather than the preeminent excellence of Philadelphia.

Two positive legacies of the wits' myth remain to be accounted: we see the first instance of a claim of American cultural exceptionalism grounded on a belief that America possessed a positive, immediate relation with nature; we see the first instance of the belief that a secularized politics of virtue would predetermine the success of American Arts. The former notion would find its fullest expression in American romanticism, the latter in American literary nationalism.

*The Citadel*  
David S. Shields