THE POEMS OF

Phillis Wheatley

REVISED AND ENLARGED EDITION

Edited with an Introduction by

JULIAN D. MASON, JR.

The University of North Carolina Press
Chapel Hill & London

1989
TO HIS HONOUR THE LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR, ON THE DEATH
OF HIS LADY. MARCH 24, 1772. 45

ALL-conquering Death! by thy resistless pow'r,
Hope's tow'ring plumage falls to rise no more!
Of scenes terrestrial how the glories fly,
Forget their splendor, and submit to die!
Who ere escap'd thee, but the saint* of old
Beyond the flood in sacred annals told,
And the great sage,† whom fiery courses drew
To heav'n's bright portals from Elisha's view;
Wond'ring he gaz'd at the resplendent car,
Then snatch'd the mantle floating on the air.
From Death these only could exemption boast,
And without dying gain'd th' immortal coast.
Not falling millions sate the tyrant's mind,
Nor can the victor's progress be confin'd.
But cease thy strife with Death, fond Nature, cease:
He leads the sinner to the realms of peace;
His to conduct to the immortal plains,
Where heav'n's Supreme in bliss and glory reigns.

There sits, illustrious Sir, thy beauteous spouse;
A gem-blaz'd circle beaming on her brows.
Hail'd with acclaim among the heav'nly choirs,
Her soul new-kindling with ascraphe fires,
To notes divine she tunes the vocal strings,
While heav'n's high concave with the music rings.
 Virtue rewards can mortal pencil paint!
No—all descriptive arts, and eloquence are faint;
* Enoch.
† Elijah.

Nor canst thou, Oliver, asent refuse
To heav'nly tidings from the Afric muse.

As soon may change thy laws, eternal fate,
As the saint miss the glories I relate;
Or her Benevolence forgotten lie,
Which wip'd the trick'ling tear from Mir'y's eye.
Where'er the adverse winds were known to blow,
When loss to loss* ennui'd, and woe to woe,
Calm and serene beneath her father's hand
She sat resign'd to the divine command.

No longer then, great Sir, her death deplore,
And let us hear the mournful sigh no more,
Restrain the sorrow streaming from thine eye,
Be all thy future moments crown'd with joy!
Nor let thy wishes be to earth confin'd,
But soaring high pursue th' unbodied mind.
Forgive the muse, forgive th' advent'rous lays,
That faint thy soul to heav'nly scenes would raise.

* Three amiable Daughters who died when just arrived to Wornens Estate.

A FAREWELL TO AMERICA. TO MRS. S.W. 46

I.
ADIEU, New-England's smiling meads,
Adieu, the flow'ry plain:
I leave thine op'ning charms, O spring,
And tempt the roaring main.

45. This poem was written after the publication of her 1772 Proposals and was a response to the death of Mary Sanford Oliver on March 17. Andrew Oliver was a Harvard graduate (1744) and was appointed provincial secretary in 1776 and lieutenant governor of Massachusetts in 1777. He was primarily a legislator and was disliked by the poet. He was one of those who signed the letter "To the PUBLIC" that was printed at the front of her book.

46. See the variant version of this poem and its note. It was written after the publication of her 1772 Proposals.