

EDWARD PHILLIPS AND THE MANUSCRIPT OF THE "DIGRESSION"

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AT SOME POINT PRIOR to the publication of Milton's *History of Britain* in 1670, a short, powerful screed against England's revolutionary impotence was excerpted from the book. After the publication of the history, and perhaps soon after, this excerpt was copied as a separate entity entitled "The Digression," which surfaced to scholarly notice in 1926. Mostly in the hand of a single, unknown seventeenth-century scribe, the "Digression" compares the political disarray in the late 1640s with the void that followed the disintegration of Roman rule in ancient Britain. Although Milton does not supply the date of the described present—it is the subject, in fact, of considerable debate—careful examination of context can, I believe, locate Milton's excursion to a short period between the political stalemate following the end of the second civil war and Pride's Purge of Parliament on December 6, 1648.¹ The "Digression," therefore, captures Milton's thinking at the very nadir of civil war history, when he perceives the revolution to have been utterly mishandled, and "ev'ry where wrong & oppression, foule and dishonest things committed daylie"² by a corrupt Parliament, and by Presbyterian divines who executed "their places more like children of the devil, unfaithfully, unjustly, unmercifully, and where not corruptly, stupidly" (YP 5:1.449). Written in the tone of a pained historian rather than an advisor to the republic, the manuscript is so openly critical as to suggest that Milton conceived a very different readership from that of his polemical prose, or that he really intended it to be printed. When it was printed, in a pirated and much altered form in 1681, Milton's criticism of the Long Parliament and Westminster Assembly was used as Tory propaganda. Called *Mr John Milton's Character of the Long Parliament and Assembly of Divines* and misdated 1641, its editors and publisher exploited the fact that even Milton—the most famous defender of the Good Old Cause—had written trenchantly on the corruption of Parliament.³

The "Digression" deserves more attention as a piece of book history that provides valuable documentation of the vicissitudes of opinion during this

uncertain period. What seemed to Milton a failed revolutionary opportunity causes him to give vent to explicit expressions of republicanism, a conceptual vocabulary often denied Milton and his fellow revolutionaries until after the execution of the king in 1649.⁴ In comparing the political void experienced by the ancient Britons to England in 1647–48, for example, Milton writes of how the English people “had set before them civil government in all her formes, and giv’n them to bee masters of thir own choise, were not found able after so many years doeing and undoeing to hitt so much as into any good and laudable way that might shew us hopes of a just and well amended commonwealth to come” (YP 5:1.441). These open expressions of criticism and republicanism are packaged in a material form very different from the printed texts that customarily embody Milton’s ideas. The difference between these material forms and their relationship to content deserves further scrutiny, as does the rather unusual form taken by the manuscript itself. The existence of the manuscript as a semiseparate entity rather than merely a cast-off fragment from the *History of Britain* provokes several questions about the nature of the private circulation of political prose in the seventeenth century. Who gave it the title “The Digression” and saw to its preservation as a separate, even secret, part of Milton’s corpus? Was it Milton or a close associate working with him, or a posthumous executor of his papers? When might this have happened? For what kind of audience was this manuscript preserved? Is this manuscript one of a kind, or—as I will suggest—part of a group of now missing copies circulated to select readers?

The material form of the manuscript itself—its layout and the nature of its corrections—offers some help in answering these questions. Strangely, these material attributes have never been fully considered, even though the function of manuscripts after Gutenberg has increasingly been the subject of inquiry. One reason for the paucity of attention devoted to this manuscript may simply be that its material aspects and problems produce more questions than they can answer. Editors have avoided some problems by simply not mentioning them, as in the case of a passage that is mysteriously blotted out, leaving an unfinished sentence and several partially legible phrases. This unfinished fragment is silently closed with an added period in the Columbia edition, and given a slightly more honest—though still unrevealing—“[.]” in the Yale text, neither edition mentioning the serious textual crux or canceled passage in the original.⁵ Focusing on such knotty and untended aspects of the manuscript, this investigation will also produce more questions than it can answer with certainty. But one previously unnoticed fact in particular will, I hope, help to answer questions concerning the nature of the manuscript’s circulation and the amount of care taken in its preservation. Milton’s nephew Edward Phillips appears to have corrected the manuscript copy, which indi-

cates that it was clearly seen—and editorially overseen—by readers other than the copyist alone, and that Phillips had a copy of the original or another, more accurate, copy against which to check the extant manuscript. It also means that Phillips bothered to check the copied manuscript word for word, which suggests that he may have been involved in having it copied, and, therefore, in seeing to its distribution. The existence of Phillips’s corrective hand indicates that he knew of the “Digression,” and almost certainly of *Character of the Long Parliament* (1681), even though he does not mention them in his biography or in the list of Milton’s works, which he prefaces with the remark that this added catalog contains “every Book of his that was ever publish’d, which to my knowledge is full and compleat.”⁶

Unfortunately, little is known about the provenance of the manuscript, which was acquired by Harvard in 1926 from a bookseller who bought it from a sale of the Mostyn library, where it had probably been since the late seventeenth century.⁷ Evidence suggests that some form of the text was once in the hands of Daniel Skinner, who claimed to have been a kind of executor of Milton’s papers. As he wrote to Samuel Pepys in November 1676, “Your worship may please to remember I once acquainted you with my having the works of Milton which he left behind him to me, which out of pure indiscretion, not dreaming any prejudice might accrue to me, I had agreed with a printer at Amsterdam to have ’um printed, which as good fortune would have it he has not printed one tittle of ’um.”⁸ Among these works, it seems, was a manuscript on the very topic of the “Digression” and *Character of the Long Parliament*. An anonymous letter written after Skinner’s departure to Holland in early November 1676, and before mid-January 1677, discovered among the papers of Henry Coventry, reported:

[S]ince the death of Mr. Milton his Books have byn lookt over by one Mr. Skinner a scholar and a bold young man who has cull’d out what he thought fitt, & amongst the rest he has taken a manuscript of Mr. Milton’s written on the Civil & Ecclesiastical Government of the Kingdom which he is resolved to print and to that purpose is gone into Holland and intends to print it at Leyden (and at this present is either there or at Nemeguen) and then to bring and disperse the copys in England.⁹

This single manuscript on “Civil & Ecclesiastical Government of the Kingdom” is most likely the “Digression,” published later in London by Henry Brome as *Character of the Long Parliament*. It seems less likely that “the reference may be a garbled reference to the state papers and theological treatise that had been sent to Elsevier,”¹⁰ though these may be included in the ambiguous phrase “among the rest,” since the “Digression” fits closely the description of a single manuscript on civil and ecclesiastical government. As Campbell, Corns, Hale, Holmes, and Tweedie write in their analysis of this evidence,

Skinner also records that [Sir Joseph] Williamson had asked permission to examine papers of Milton in his possession. Skinner was so flattered by this request that he composed another Latin epistle petitioning for preferment, and presented it to Sir Joseph; it is now lost. In due course Williamson "return'd me my papers with many thanks." . . . [T]hese papers may . . . have included the Digression, though there are two other possibilities with respect to this manuscript: it may have been sent to Elsevier, if this is the work to which the Longleat letter [that is, the above letter among Coventry's papers] refers, or it may have been retained (or copied) by Williamson, who could have passed it to Roger L'Estrange, who arranged for Brome to print it.¹¹

If Skinner were the official executor of Milton's papers, of course, it would be fitting for him to have possession of the manuscript in Milton's own hand, as an excerpt of the *History of Britain*, rather than as a separate manuscript on "Civil & Ecclesiastical Government."¹² The fact that it is called this soon after Milton's death—approximately two years—indicates that the manuscript had a separate identity long before it was appropriated by Brome in 1680. It seems most likely that the "Digression" as a separate entity emerged from the cutting room floor just prior to the *History's* publication in 1670, and possibly before that. William Parker believes that "Milton suppressed the passage [of the "Digression"] himself, long before the *History* was printed,"¹³ and presumably before 1657, since Milton writes disparagingly to Henry de Brass on July 15, 1657, of the historian who essentially digresses into topical criticism, "lest, by interrupting the thread of events, the Historian should invade the office of the Political Writer: for, if the Historian, in explicating counsels and narrating facts, follows truth most of all, and not his own fancy or conjecture, he fulfils his proper duty."¹⁴ This is indeed a strange admission, for if the "Digression" were still in the book, Milton clearly would be implicating himself. But there is more evidence that topical political writing was censored in 1670, as I mention at the end of this essay, and therefore the "Digression" would not have been the only aspect of *The History of Britain* that invaded the office of a political writer that Milton nonetheless maintained in his text. It seems more likely that Milton would have made the decision to cut this passage when preparing the manuscript for press in 1670, and not precisely because he did not wish to be topical, but because the topicality had itself passed into history.

What is strange about the anonymous 1676–77 description of a separate manuscript on "Civil & Ecclesiastical Government" is that while it accurately describes the manuscript's content, it bears no hint that it is a digression from another text, or that it begins with a serious historical description of "this land soon after the Romans going out"—the very part of the digression *Character of the Long Parliament*. Indeed, it seems more than coincidental that the

Character begins exactly two pages—one leaf—in from the beginning of the "Digression." The coincidence that the printed text starts exactly one leaf in suggests the possibility that this first leaf was missing from the copytext used by the printer. This manuscript understood to be on "Civil & Ecclesiastical Government" may thus already have been an altered form of "The Digression / in Milton's *History of England*," as the extant manuscript is titled.

But what separates the "Digression" even more from *Character of the Long Parliament* are a couple of short passages contained in the *Character* that are not in the "Digression." These indicate either some kind of interpolation on the part of the editors in preparing the manuscript for print, or, much more likely, they indicate that the *Character* derives from a slightly different manuscript. These added words have, as French Fogle points out, "a true Miltonic ring" (YP 5:1.407), and seem very unlikely to have been added in the royalist editorial enterprise of 1680. In the first of these passages, which concerns the suppression of religious freedom and the Presbyterians' aims to control the magistracy, Milton writes of how the "Church-men" persuaded "the magistrate to use [force] as a stronger means to subdue & bring in conscience than evangellic perswasion" (5:1.447). In *Character of the Long Parliament*, this sentence continues, after a colon: "Distrusting the Virtue of their own Spiritual weapons, which were given them, if they be rightly called, with full warrant of sufficiency to pull down all thoughts and imaginations that exalt themselves against God" (5:1.446). These words regrettably bear the typographical and orthographic, and possibly the stylistic alterations of the late-seventeenth-century editor, so it is hard to recover Milton's voice with certainty from them. These are, however, phrases that match closely Milton's conceptual and verbal lexicon. In *The Reason of Church Government*, for example, he writes approvingly of the "approved way which the Gospell prescribes" "the spirituall weapons of holy censure" (YP 1:848). Indeed, the full context of the sentence—that is, the longer version in *Character of the Long Parliament*—relates closely to the opening opposition of persuasion and force in *The Reason of Church Government* that "persuasion certainly is a more winning, and more manlike way to keepe men in obedience then feare" (1.745); the behavior of the Presbyterians has thus violated some of the central ideals established for Milton in his earlier tract. The words "exalt themselves against God" function in both *Character of the Long Parliament* and in *The Reason of Church Government* as an allusion to 2 Corinthians 10:4, although Milton only cites this passage in the antiprelatical tract, and quotes it in full, drawing from the King James Version: "warfare, not carnall, but mighty through God to the pulling downe of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth it selfe against

the knowledge of God" (YP 1:848; 2 Cor. 10:4–5). Although the royalist editor of *Character of the Long Parliament* would have been motivated to make stylistic alterations, he would have had no intention—to say nothing of ability—of impersonating Milton and embellishing a sectarian argument against the conformist policies of Presbyterians in the late 1640s.

The other lines found only in *Character of the Long Parliament* occur within a page of those discussed above. Milton writes in the "Digression" that the Presbyterians' "intents were cleere to be no other then to have set up a spiriual tyrannie by a secular power to the advancing of thir owne authorit[ie] above the magistate" (YP 5:1.447). In the *Character*, this passage was followed after a comma by "whom they would have made their Executioner, to punish Church-Dellinquencies, whereof Civil Laws have no cognizance" (446). While these words may be less recognizably Miltonic, they nonetheless derive from the kind of language Milton used in arguing against Presbyterian intolerance in the late 1640s. In *Observations upon the Articles of Peace* (1649), for example, Milton similarly argues against the idea that the magistrate should execute, or bear a sword against, supposed spiritual crimes. He inveighs, for example, against the use of the "fleshly arm of Magistracy in the execution of a spirituall Discipline, to punish and amerce by any corporall infliction those whose consciences cannot be edifi'd by what authority they are compell'd" (YP 3:326). "These Divines might know," he writes here about this kind of Presbyterian, "that to extirpat all these things can be no work of the Civil sword, but of the spirituall which is the Word of God" (3:324). The closeness of this passage in *Character of the Long Parliament* to Miltonic language of the 1640s suggests that it would not have been added by the editors of Milton's manuscript. The two additional Miltonic passages in the *Character* thus strongly suggest that at least one different authentic manuscript was in circulation besides the "Digression."

The extant manuscript is clearly designed not for the purposes of publication, but to accompany the *History of Britain* itself (see fig. 1). Indeed, even the words "in Miltons History of England" seem to have been added afterwards, as if it had seemed unnecessary at its creation to indicate where it went. The manuscript comprises only six sheets, double-sided, on paper that measures approximately 6 by 7.5 inches. Originally, it was not bound, but was folded to fit in a 4 $\frac{3}{8}$ by 3 $\frac{7}{8}$ inch space—perhaps to fit an envelope, or to fit within the book. There are small tears from wear along one crease of each page, indicating that it spent a fair part of its life in this folded condition. Except for a couple of problematic passages, the short manuscript has every appearance of being a faithful copy of the original, or of another good copy. Many of Milton's idiosyncrasies—such as his spelling of "thir," and his frequent use of apostrophes—remain intact.¹⁵ Indeed, the orthographic idio-

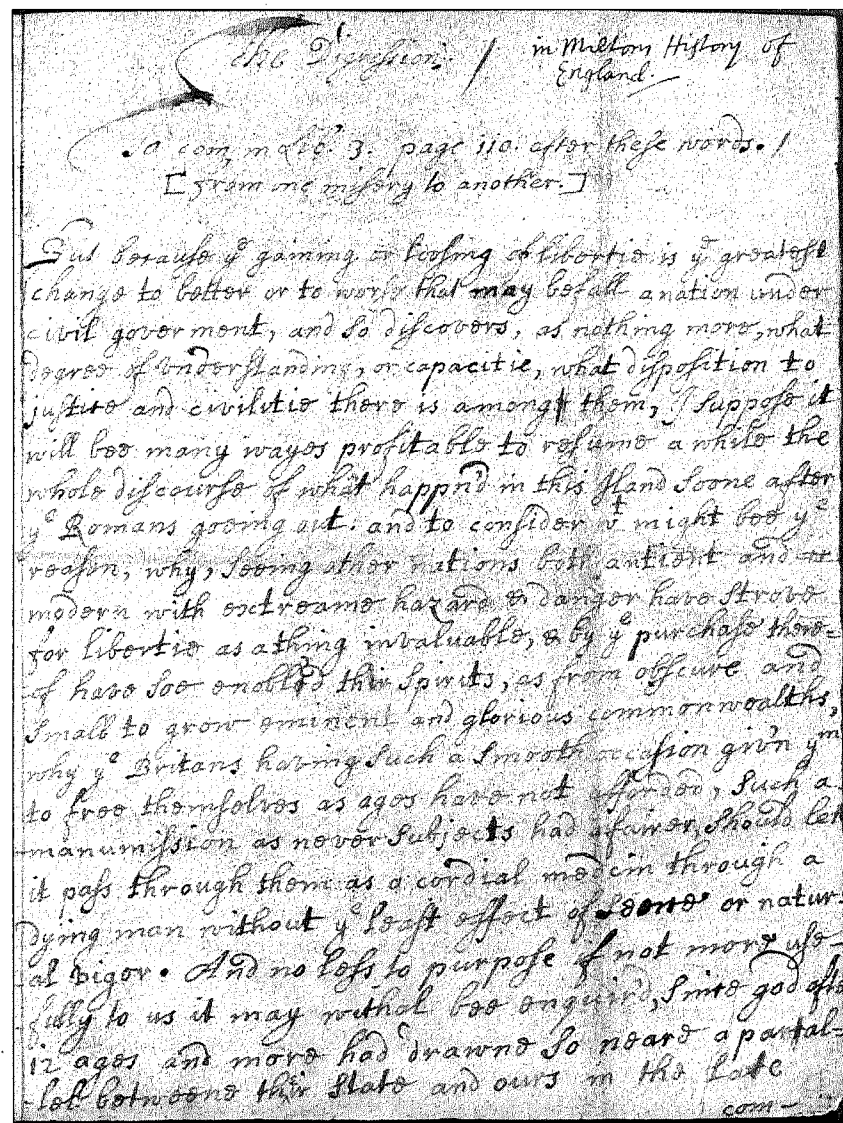


Figure 1. The opening to the "Digression." The words "in Miltons History of England" appear to have been added later, and possibly by another hand. Harvard MS Eng 901 (Lobby XI.2.69). By permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

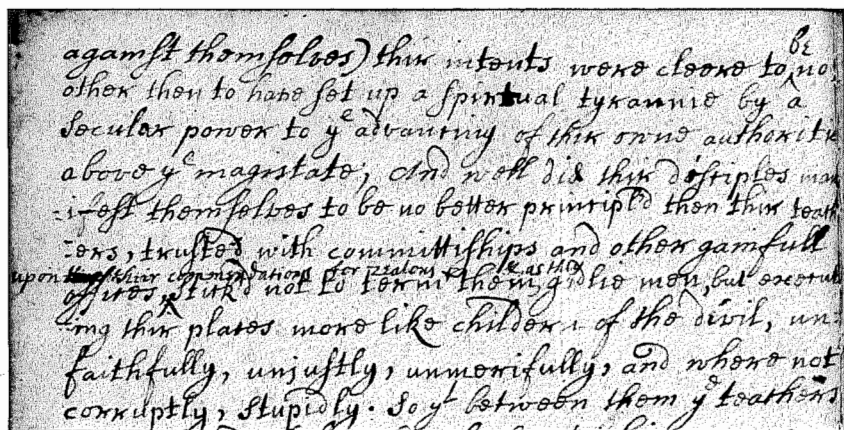


Figure 2. The first several lines of page 8 of the "Digression," showing corrections made by Edward Phillips. Harvard MS Eng 901 (Lobby XI.2.69). By permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

synchronies, while not conclusive, add to the body of evidence that mandate against dating the manuscript's composition after Milton's blindness in 1652, since the original appears not to have been the product of dictation but a copy of Milton's holograph.¹⁶ While the manuscript is very neat, and has every appearance of a scribal copy that mechanically follows its original, there are a couple of corrections late in the manuscript that suggest some deviation (if not just error) in the scribe's work. These include the page with corrections by Phillips and a page in which three lines of text have been blotted out that are clearly not repeated elsewhere on the page—indicating either that a Miltonic phrase was deleted, or that it was a scribal interpolation deemed inauthentic by the corrector. The first of these problematic sections in the manuscript simply indicates inadvertent omissions on the part of the copyist: the word "be" is left out in one instance, and what appears to have been an entire line of text from the manuscript being copied is also missing (see fig. 2).

Here is a transcription of the emended section, with the words in Edward Phillips's distinct hand in italics:

against themselves) thir intents were cleere to ^{be} no
other than to have set up a spiritual tyrannie by a
secular power to the advancing of thir owne authoritie
above the magistate; And well did thir disciples man-
ifest themselves to be no better principl'd than thir teach-
ers, trusted with the committiships and others gamfull
upon *their their commendations for zealous & as they*

affires, & stick'd not to term them, godlie men, but execu[t]
-ing thir places more like children of the devil, un-
-faithfully, unjustly, unmercifully, and where not
corruptly, stupidly.

The added "be" seems most likely to be in Phillips's hand, since the Greek ε is characteristic of him, and the only two other Greek ε's in the manuscript are the similarly corrected word "fowlely" (9), and in the word "devil" on this same page. Even though "devil" appears in the main text, it too seems to have been corrected, since the clear vestiges of a dotted "i" from the strange spelling "divil" remain (see fig. 2). The added line seems not to be the work of the unknown scribal hand, but of Edward Phillips. The persistent use of Phillips's distinctive Greek ε in the added line, as well as several other stylistic features—the *e*, *r*, *s*, *d*, and in particular the *d* in relation to other letters such as the combination "nda," reproduced in detail in figures 3–7—demonstrate that this added line does not belong to the hand of the first scribe, but to the author's nephew. Indeed, a string of the same letters "ndatio" is fortunately present in both Phillips's Latin entry in the *Commonplace Book* and his English correction in the "Digression" (fig. 4), showing not only the same letter formation, but also the same series of strokes in forming the string of six letters, and the same ligatures used to connect them. Similar sequences of these letters (*andat*) in the unknown scribe's hand (fig. 5) indicate a very different style. The unknown scribe writes in a distinct, uniform, and stylized manner, with somewhat flamboyant back-arching ascenders on the *d* (which swoop toward the opposite direction of Phillips's perfunctory, upright, and loop-completing ascender), an inverted Elizabethan-style *e*, a *k*-like cut-off *r*, an *r*-like *c*, and a very long internal *s*.

These comparative samples of Phillips's characteristic hand come from two entries in Milton's *Commonplace Book*, which Maurice Kelley demonstrated were in Phillips's handwriting. Kelley compared the writing in the *Commonplace Book* to a letter penned on Milton's behalf by Edward Phillips on February 13, 1651 (that is, 1652). The close correspondence between the two samples of Phillips's handwriting has partially influenced the dating of the entries in the *Commonplace Book*—on Machiavelli's *Discorsi*—to the same period in the early 1650s.¹⁷ This dating might be reconsidered, however, for it seems based on a random coincidence of what has survived. The present addition to the samples of Phillips's hand should help correct this perception, since he must have made these corrections after 1670, as the extant manuscript is designed to go with the published history. There are other samples of Phillips's hand, which often appears in making corrections and amendments. He made a couple of additions to Aubrey's manuscript

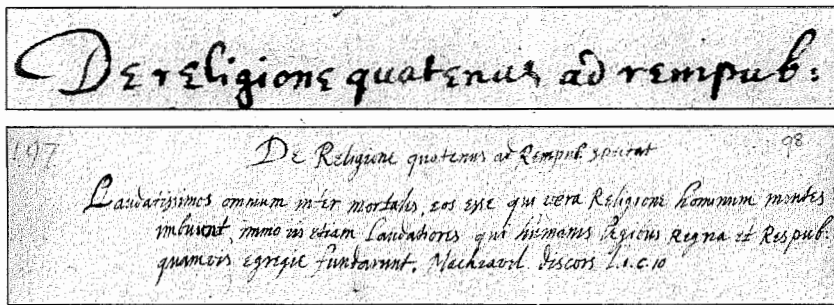


Figure 3. Edward Phillips's hand in the *Commonplace Book*, in the index (above), and on page 197 (below). British Library MS Additional 36354. By permission of the British Library.

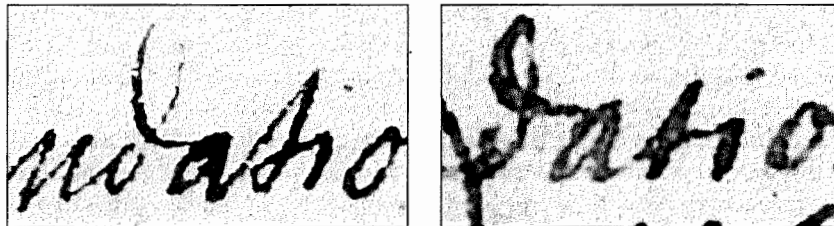


Figure 4. Edward Phillips's "andatio" in the *Commonplace Book* (left) and "ndatio" in the "Digression" (right), showing the upright ascender of the *d* and the ligatures of the *d* and the *a*.

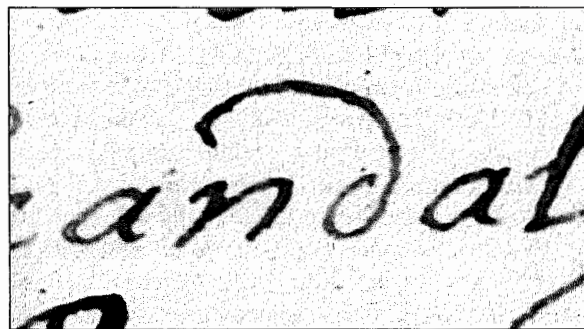


Figure 5. The "Digression" scribe's "anda," showing the sweeping ascender not found in Phillips's hand.



Figure 6. Phillips's "er" in the *Commonplace Book* (left) and "their" in the "Digression" (right) showing a distinctly different *e* and *r* from the scribe of the "Digression."

"Life," in which he wrote a passage on Milton's return to England and on his and John Phillips's subsequent tutelage, and he also added a note to a list of Milton's works that he was his "chief amanuensis" next to *Paradise Regained* and *Paradise Lost*.¹⁸ Edward Phillips's handwriting seems also to appear in a corrective capacity in a later manuscript of *Paradise Lost* designed to be the printer's copy, which was copied by an unknown scribe whose own hand appears in the *Commonplace Book*.¹⁹ Phillips also makes a couple of entries along with a careful cross-referencing note in Milton's *Commonplace Book*.²⁰ As Ann Coiro also suggests in this volume, Edward and John were deeply invested in their uncle's intellectual endeavors. Phillips writes of the composition process of *Paradise Lost*, which he claims to have "had the perusal of . . . from the very beginning," that he would come by to visit Milton, and Milton would have dictated a "Parcel of Ten, Twenty, or Thirty Verses at a Time, which being Written by whatever hand came next, might possibly want Correction as to the Orthography and Pointing."²¹ Phillips seems to be following a similar pattern—correcting some of the spelling of the scribe, possibly adding some pointing, and, in this case, adding missing words from the copied text.

But whether Phillips was involved in canceling Miltonic passages—or perhaps non-Miltonic passages—is the question that confronts readers on the

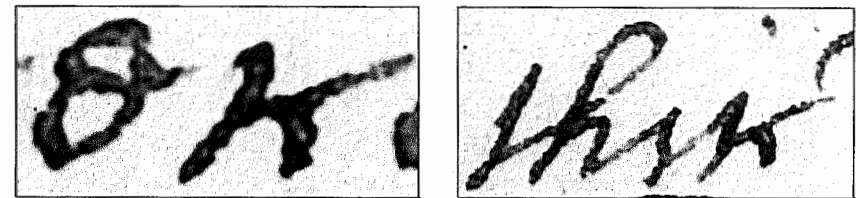


Figure 7. The "Digression" scribe's "er" (left) and "thir" (right).

following page (see fig. 8). This page produces a new set of mysteries: a passage of three lines canceled so that most, but not all, of the words remain legible. Surprisingly, as I have mentioned, the existence of these words is not noted in the authoritative editions of the text, and instead a period is silently introduced—though in brackets in the Yale edition—where the canceled clauses had left a sentence broken off at a comma.²²

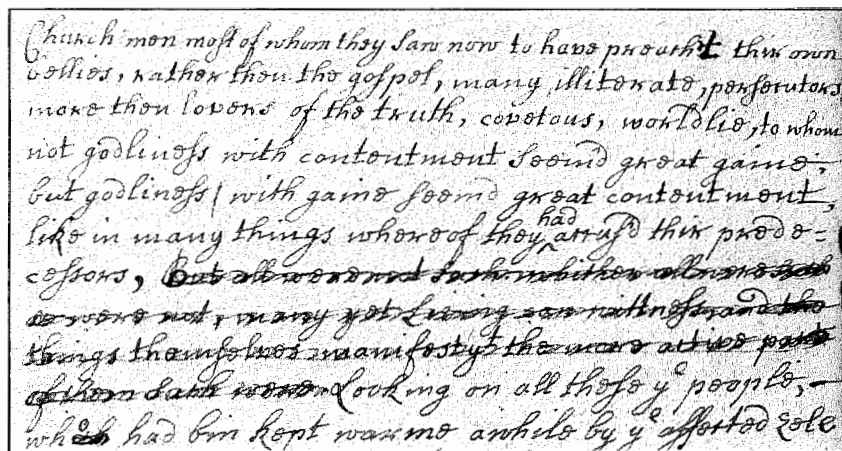


Figure 8. The first several lines of page 9 of the "Digression," showing a series of canceled words after an uncorrected comma.

Church-men most of whom they saw not to have preach'd thir own bellies, rather than the gospel, many illiterateate, persecutors more then lovers of the truth, covetous, worldlie, to whom not godliness with contentment seem'd great gaine, but godliness with gaine seem'd great contentment, like in many things whereof they had accused their predecessors, [But] all were [not such][whither] all were [such] [as] were not, many yet Living can witnesse, and the things themselves manifest that the more active part of them [such] [were] Looking on all these the people, which had bin kept warm awhile by the affected zeale of thir pulpits, after a false heat became more cold, & obdurate then before; some turning to leudness[,] some to flat atheisme, put beside thir old religion, & fowlely scandalis'd in what they expected should be new.

While a few of the words in this textual crux possibly remain undecipherable, some clearly legible phrases deserve consideration. Unless a few undecipherable words manage to alter the context of the phrase about how "many yet Living can witnesse" and somehow cause them to apply to another event than the history reported here, the statement could not have been written within only a few years of the events recounted (that is, ca. 1643–48). It is also unlikely that they were written by a "yet living" man of forty, as Milton was in 1648. The lines may have been written ten years after the events, but still more likely in the same period that the manuscript itself was transcribed, sometime after 1670. This is the voice of someone calling on the witness of others who were there—probably of someone who had outlived many of those "living" at the time, such as Milton. Although Austin Woolrych might have used this passage in his argument that Milton in fact wrote the "Digression" in 1660,²³ this cannot be the case because it suggests that Milton was indeed looking back from a distance. First, the orthography is so close to Milton's own that it indicates that it could not have been written during his blindness (after 1652). Second, a fresh indictment of the problems of 1643–48 (with no mention of the many shifts in government after that) would have little relevance in the pressing context of 1659–60. The words are much more likely to have been added in a revision process.

Here the realm of possibility opens wider, but it is worth working through the different possibilities not only to ascertain what is not the case, but also in the hope that more evidence might surface that would determine the identity of the scribe, or the full sense of the deleted passage. If Milton sought to call upon the "witness" of those "still living," he would have been involved in preserving and slightly revising the "Digression" into a semi-independent text, rather than merely allowing the unused passage from the manuscript of the *History of Britain* to fall into the hands of others who would take it upon themselves to create this digression at a later date. The canceled lines further suggest that the manuscript was produced shortly after the publication of the *History* to be circulated, as Shakespeare's sonnets were, to his "private friends" in manuscript.²⁴ But why were these words canceled, and by whom?

It seems likely that Phillips would have made the correction, since he was involved in correcting the other passages. If he were following the same pattern of correction as in other instances, he would be correcting here—if it is still Phillips—with the intention of maintaining the authenticity of the Miltonic text. If he were concerned with authenticity, it may have been because the "yet living" passage was not original to the piece, or because it may have been the interpolation of another scribe. Possibly, Phillips sought not to offend those "yet living." He may have been simply trimming his

uncle's writing for infelicities of style, overlong sentences, or deviations from the original text. This clipped sentence might be compared to the long sentences preserved in *Character of the Long Parliament* but not in the "Digression," an omission that suggests that other unnecessary passages might have been trimmed from earlier versions of the manuscript, and perhaps also by Phillips. Yet strangely, this extended sentence does not appear in the *Character*; instead, there is simply some additional pointing: the broken-off comma in the "Digression" is converted to a colon rather than a period, and commas are added to subsequent clauses (see YP 5:1.448).

All that we can really say with some confidence is that Phillips possessed a version of this manuscript from which to make the first set of corrections on page 8. That, along with the fact that he fastidiously sought to produce a good edition of the manuscript, implies the intention to provide someone else—and likely more than one other person—with copies of this manuscript. This effort of distribution is further suggested in the nature of the scribal copy: the quality of the scribe's hand, the scribe's eyeskip, implying though not necessitating a repetitious process; the placement and formal style of the title, carefully centered with instructions for where the passage is "to come," with a later reminder of the book it digresses from. It is not designed to remain among a set of preserved papers, but to be read with (or without) the *History of Britain*. But the existence of multiple copies by the mid-1670s is also suggested by the manuscript reportedly being in the hands of a different set of people—Skinner and perhaps Sir Joseph Williamson—and that the manuscript somehow made its way into the hands of Roger L'Estrange and Brome. The manuscript now at Harvard is almost certainly not the copytext used for the 1681 publication. It would not have survived in such good condition the heavy editing by people who had commandeered it for a Tory position, and since it was to be printed, there would be even less reason to preserve it. As discussed, the printed version also contains Miltonic passages that are not likely to have been invented by these Tory printers. And, as has also been mentioned, the copytext may well have been missing its first leaf.

The conclusion that Phillips possessed a copy of the manuscript and corrected a copy of the manuscript would be easier to arrive at were it not for the strange disconnection between this evidence and his omissions in the biography and in the list of Milton's works that accompanied it. In her comments on Phillips's *Theatrum Poetarum* in this volume, Ann Coiro mentions that Edward's gestures of connectedness to his uncle are "coy," even peculiar and ironic. In the biography, Phillips seems to register this connection with a strange set of conspicuous omissions. On one level, the omission of *Character of the Long Parliament* from the list of Milton's works helps to confirm the existence of multiple manuscripts, since it suggests that Phillips was not a

witting agent in providing the manuscript to be published. Yet it is extremely hard to believe that he would not have heard of the pirated publication of the "Digression" in the thirteen years prior to his account. Someone who had such an investment in his uncle's intellectual property would have been keen to hear of any use of it. This omission may thus reflect a disapproval of unauthorized use. He would have known, among other things, that the excursus was not about 1641.

Yet more puzzling is Phillips's careful account of "passages" that were excerpted from the history that seem to not refer to the "Digression," but to something else. Phillips records in his biography, which appeared with *Letters of State* (1694), that in 1670 Milton "finisht and publisht his History of our Nation till the Conquest, all compleat so far as he went, some Passages only excepted, which, being thought too sharp against the Clergy, could not pass the Hand of the Licencer, were in the Hands of the late Earl of Anglesey while he liv'd; where at present is uncertain."²⁵ Could Phillips be referring to the "Digression" here? It has been generally thought that Milton removed the "Digression" from the text himself, not the licenser, and for structural, aesthetic, and logical reasons rather than political fear: a sharp criticism of the Presbyterians and Parliament in 1648 would no longer be relevant to the general reader in 1670.²⁶ At any rate, this description does not fit the "Digression," which is a discrete passage, rather than passages, and it is not about the clergy, especially not of the English church, as is suggested, but mostly about the impotency of the English people. Phillips goes on to refer to these excised passages as "papers": "The said Earl of Anglesey whom he had presented with a Copy of the unlicens'd Papers of his History, came often here to visit him, as very much coveting his society and converse; as likewise others of the Nobility, and many persons of eminent quality[.]" (76). Given that *Character of the Long Parliament* was published at this point, if this were the "Digression," Phillips's words seem all the more oblique: most of the said passages were published, or released, as it were, from the licenser. Further, Phillips would have surely had a copy of the "Digression" himself, or he would have registered its loss more accurately, given that he had had an intimate knowledge of it. He must not be referring to the "Digression" here—but why does he not mention it, and instead go to the trouble of mentioning unlicensed passages? Could such disembodied passages on the clergy really have amounted to enough to create a presentation copy (of sorts) for an earl? Perhaps he means that the Earl of Anglesey had an entire manuscript copy of the *History of Britain*, including the excised passages. Whatever Phillips is up to here, it is clear that he is hiding information, preserving a private Milton from public view.

John Toland, who wrote a more detailed account shortly after Phillips's

in 1699, nonetheless had different qualifications: he did not know Milton personally, as he was born in 1670, the year the *History of Britain* appeared. Phillips, on the other hand, was forty in 1670. Either Toland had a different source or was simply embellishing Phillips's history, and perhaps adding distortion to distortion:

In the year [16]70 also came abroad his History of Britain, whereof we had occasion to speak before. He deduc'd it only to the Norman Conquest, and yet we have it not as it came out of his hands; for the Licensers, those sworn Officers to destroy Learning, Liberty and good sense, expung'd several passages of it wherein he expos'd the Superstition, Pride, and Cunning of the Popish Monks in the Saxon Times, but apply'd by the sagacious licensers to Charles the Second's Bishops. . . . but not to digress [pun intended?] too far, our Author bestow'd a Copy of the unlicens'd Papers of his History on the Earl of Anglesey, his constant Visitor.²⁷

Yet we need more evidence than the tantalizing "but not to digress too far" to suggest that Toland had any access to a source of information more detailed or credible than Phillips. Until such evidence appears, this passage can only be regarded with suspicion as a spurious embellishment and potential red herring.

I conclude, therefore, with a call to arms of a pacific, scholarly sort, for I suspect that some of the evidence required to fill in the gaps of this story remains unexamined in an archive such as the Public Record Office, the Bodleian, or a small private collection. The outstanding work conducted by the team of researchers who unearthed new evidence pertaining to the provenance of the *De Doctrina Christiana* provides an exemplary model of how archival work can be done collaboratively and collectively. This recently conducted archival project also proves that information vital to understanding Milton's work—perhaps in the paper remains of the Earl of Anglesey, Lord Preston, Brome, L'Estrange, Skinner, or Edward Phillips—remains hidden only because it has not yet been sifted.

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Notes

1. Late 1648 as the moment of composition has been argued in Barbara Lewalski, *The Life of Milton: A Critical Biography* (Oxford, 2000), 212–16, and will be the subject of a forthcoming study of mine. One compelling piece of evidence is in a contemporary dating by Samuel Hartlib, C. H. Turnbull, *Hartlib, Dury and Comenius: Gleanings from Hartlib's Papers* (London, 1947), who writes in his diary in 1648 that "Milton is not only writing a Univ. History of Engl. but also an Epitome of all Purchas Volumes" (40). But for different views, see Austin Woolrych, "The Date of the Digression in Milton's *History of Britain*," in *For Veronica Wedgwood These: Studies in*

Seventeenth-Century History, ed. Richard Ollard and Pamela Tudor-Craig (London, 1986), 217–46; Nicholas von Maltzahn, Milton's "History of Britain": *Republican Historiography in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1991), chap. 2; their disagreement is revisited in Woolrych, "Dating Milton's *History of Britain*," *Historical Journal* 36, no. 4 (1993): 929–43; and von Maltzahn, "Dating the Digression in Milton's *History of Britain*," *Historical Journal* 36, no. 4 (1993): 945–56.

2. *The Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, 8 vols., ed. Don M. Wolfe et al. (New Haven, 1953–82), 5:1.443, hereafter cited in the text as YP.

3. See von Maltzahn, Milton's "History of Britain," chap. 2.

4. Thomas N. Corns, "Milton and the Characteristics of a Free Commonwealth," in *Milton and Republicanism*, ed. David Armitage, Armand Himy, and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge, 1995), 25.

5. *The Works of John Milton*, 18 vols. in 21, ed. Frank Allen Patterson et al. (New York, 1931–42), 10:323; hereafter cited as CM.

6. Published with *Letters of State Written by Mr. John Milton . . . to Which is Added an Account of His Life* (London, 1694), xlv.

7. See YP 5:1.406. This information derives from a letter from William Jackson, librarian at Harvard, to French Fogle; there is no record of this at Harvard; see also Peter Beal, *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*, vol. 2 (London, 1993), pt. 2, p. 99.

8. Bodleian MS Rawlinson A185, fols. 271–74; Pepys of 9/19 November 1676; quoted from an analysis of this evidence in Gordon Campbell, Thomas N. Corns, John K. Hale, David I. Holmes, and Fiona J. Tweedie, "The Provenance of *De Doctrina Christiana*," *MQ* 31, no. 3 (1997): 73. The following paragraph relies heavily on this important research. See also James Holly Hanford, "Pepys and the Skinner Family," *Review of English Studies* 7, no. 27 (1931): 264.

9. Longleat, Coventry Papers f.60, in Campbell et al., "The Provenance of *De Doctrina Christiana*," 73.

10. Campbell et al., "The Provenance of *De Doctrina Christiana*," 73.

11. *Ibid.*, 73.

12. On Skinner's charge of the state papers, see Leo Miller, "Milton's Personal Letters and Daniel Skinner," *N&Q* 30, no. 5 (1983): 431–32.

13. William Riley Parker, *Milton: A Biography*, 2 vols. (1968; rev. ed. 1996), 940.

14. Letter 23, quoted in YP 5:1.xlv.

15. Helen Darbishire, ed., *The Early Lives of Milton* (New York, 1952), 341.

16. This point is made by von Maltzahn, "Dating the Digression," 949.

17. Maurice Kelley, "Milton and Machiavelli's *Discorsi*," *Studies in Bibliography* 4 (1951–52): 125–27. This is the letter to Hermann Mylius, which is numbered in YP 4:2 as 18, pp. 847–48, and is kept in the Niedersächsische Staatsarchiv at Oldenburg under the pressmark Bestd. 20 (Grafschaft Oldenburg), Tit. 38, No. 73, Fasc. 5, no. 8. See also Beal, *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*, 2:2.72–73.

18. This is in the Bodleian MS Aubrey 8, f. 68, which is partially reproduced in Darbishire, *Early Lives*, 12; see also 9. See also Kelley, "Milton and Machiavelli's *Discorsi*," plate 2. For another sample of his writing, see Samuel Leigh Sotheby, *Ramblings in the Elucidation of the Autograph of Milton* (London, 1861), plate 24, opposite p. 190.

19. This hand, dubbed "Amanuensis D" by James Holly Hanford, "The Chronology of Milton's Private Studies," *PMLA* 36 (1921): 284–85, is responsible for two entries from Dante and Choniate (in *Commonplace Book*, YP 1:249). The manuscript of *Paradise Lost*, Book One, at the Pierpont Morgan Library, is discussed by Beal, *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*, 2:2.95; Helen Darbishire, ed., *The Manuscript of Milton's "Paradise Lost" Book 1* (Oxford, 1931); and Harris Francis Fletcher, ed., *John Milton's Complete Poetical Works, Reproduced in*

Photographic Facsimile, 4 vols. (Urbana, 1945), 2:31-99. The corrections to this carefully produced manuscript are very slight by comparison with the manuscript of the "Digression."

20. There are a few indications that he took matters into his own hands here. In one instance in the *Commonplace Book*, for example, he supplies a detailed marginal cross-reference to a missing notebook of Milton's in Latin, "See the Theological Index, Of Not Forcing Religion" (YP 1:477), the only cross-reference made by one of the seven non-Miltonic hands in the *Commonplace Book*, and also the only one of the twelve cross-references that actually names the Index; the others merely point to topics and to "another index." The cross-reference suggests a self-motivated student of Milton's who knew both notebooks well enough to draw connections between topics. See YP 1:365n1 for a list. See Parker, *Milton*, 2:804n6. John Shawcross, *Arms of the Family: The Significance of John Milton's Relatives and Associates* (Lexington, Ky., 2004), 73, states that "Edward frequently aided his uncle in the recording, correction, and publication of his work," which rightly applies to a wide period of connection.

21. Darbishire, *Early Lives*, 73.

22. It is possible that these canceled words never close the period, and that the capital L in "Looking on all those people" is one of a few examples of a stylistic tic this scribe uses to represent lower-case l's as uppercase (as in "Living," which follows).

23. Woolrych, "The Date of the Digression," 217-46.

24. Francis Meres, *Wits Commonwealthe* (1598; reprint, London, 1634), 623.

25. Darbishire, *Early Lives*, 75.

26. See French Fogle, YP 5:1.411-12.

27. Darbishire, *Early Lives*, 185.