3 Orinda and Female Intimacy*

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A seventeenth-century female poet whose work found its way into print, Katherine Philips, 'the matchless Orinda', nonetheless secured a reputation among her contemporaries for exemplary femininity. Elaine Hobby explains this historical curiosity as the result of a carefully devised strategy: the Philips who wrote apparently unobjectionable poems about love and friendship and modestly denied any desire for or entitlement to public recognition was a self-representation through which the poet turned contemporary constructions of femininity into a license to write. Hobby's formulation of the relationship between early women's writing and the ideologies of gender which disallowed it foregrounds human agency: within the limits of the patriarchal world she inhabited, Philips managed to negotiate a small space of self-determination. Indeed, Hobby's theory of strategic self-construction, while persuasively argued, endows Philips with a degree of psychic autonomy which contrasts with Celia A. Easton's study of the poet.

Katherine Philips, 'the Matchless Orinda', the author of a book of poetry, two play translations and some published correspondence, has long been perceived as a model lady poetess, dabbling in versification in a rural Welsh backwater, confining her attention solely to the proper feminine concerns of love and friendship. It is generally agreed that she was modestly alarmed at the prospect of any public attention for her work. By briefly examining her *Letters from Orinda to Poliarchus* (her correspondence with the Master of Ceremonies at Charles II's court, Charles Cotterell) and the images of constraint and retirement found in her poetry, I will suggest that the 'Orinda' persona who appears in modern critical accounts is a creation made necessary by the particular

* Reprinted from Elaine Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity: English Women's Writing 1649–88* (London: Virago, 1988), pp. 128–42.

circumstances confronting this seventeenth-century woman poet. Through 'Orinda', Philips gained acceptance in her own period, and has a reputation that has survived into our own. I will then go on to examine more closely Philips's best-known work, her poetry celebrating women's friendship, and how it engages with the conventions of the courtly love tradition to produce an image of female solidarity (and, perhaps, of lesbian love) that could be sustained within the tight constraints of marriage.[1]

Since her death in 1664, Katherine Philips's writings have never dropped entirely from the public eye.[2] There is a certain significant irony in this, since she is remembered as the archetypal blushing poetess, who shied away from any public recognition of her works. She never desired publication, and was horrified when a surreptitious edition of her poetry appeared in 1664, the story goes. The figure who appears in her poetry and her *Letters to Poliarchus* is 'the matchless Orinda', the self-effacing lady poet who thoroughly understands that she is inferior to the male sex. As such, she has been allowed a tiny and peripheral place in the literary canon.

In part, the image of Orinda that has come down to us is dependent on the belief that her writing was really a secret and private affair, her poems passed around only in manuscript form to a few trusted friends. This is an anachronistic distortion of the method of 'publication' that she used: circulation of manuscripts was the normal way to make writing public before the widespread use of printed books, and was a method that continued to be popular in court circles throughout the reign of Charles II, at least.[3] Such a description also fails to consider the fact that, as a royalist poet married to a leading parliamentarian, she had positive reasons for avoiding too much public attention during the 1650s, which was when she did most of her writing. Bearing these factors in mind, we find that the evidence suggests that she was actually a well-known writer.

As early as 1651, when she was nineteen years old, Philips's writing was sufficiently well thought of for a poem of hers to be prefaced to the posthumous edition of William Cartwright's plays, and a poem written in praise of Philips by Henry Vaughan was included by him in his collected works in that same year. She must already have been circulating some of her writings. In 1655, a song of hers was printed by Henry Lawes in his *Second Book of Ayres*. Although Katherine Philips's identity was not revealed in Cartwright's text, both Vaughan and Lawes printed her full name. It is clear that her achievements were well known, at least among prestigious royalists. She addressed poems to Francis Finch, John Birkenhead and Sir Edward Dering, and the fact that they were also involved with the publication of Cartwright's plays and the *Second Book of Ayres* could indicate that her acquaintance with

them dated from 1651 or even earlier. It is not surprising to find that by 1657, when Jeremy Taylor answered in print Katherine Philips's enquiries about the nature of friendship, his complimentary address to her should have heralded her as someone known to be 'so eminent in friendships'.[4] And after the Restoration, she sought out recognition from aristocracy and royalty, sending poems to the Duchess of York, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and to King Charles himself, and dedicating her translation *Pompey* to the Countess of Cork. Her skill as a translator had a sufficiently high public profile for John Davies to praise her by name when dedicating his 1659 translation of *Cléopatre* to her in 1662, and for Lord Roscommon to claim to have undertaken a translation from French purely in compliment to her.[5] Any assessment of Philips's writing that suggests that she was of a shy and retiring spirit, forced into the public eye in 1664 against her strongest inclinations, is choosing to ignore her involvement with this then more traditional form of public recognition. The 'public' she was interested in reaching was the coterie of court and leading poets, not the wider world.

The assertion that Philips did not wish her works published is based on the letters she wrote to Sir Charles Cotterell between 1661 and 1664, published in 1705 after his death as *Letters from Orinda to Poliarchus*. The correspondence deals in part with her preparing a translation of Corneille's *Pompée*, and seeing it onto the stage and through the press in 1663, and her attempts to suppress an unofficial edition of her poems in 1664. The established judgement of these letters' significance is that they demonstrate Katherine Philips's blushing horror at the thought of her works and name becoming public property. They are used to reconfirm the image of her that has come down to us from posterity. The fact that *Pompey* was published without identifying the translator is seen as proof that Philips held a suitably modest assessment of her own abilities. What is not noticed is that the prologue to the play, written by the Earl of Roscommon, and its epilogue by Sir Edward Dering, both identify the author as female.[6] Given Philips's reputation as a translator, and the fact that she was living in Dublin during the play's much-acclaimed performance there, it is likely that her identity was common knowledge, at least among those whose opinion of her she valued. In the copy that she sent to the Countess of Roscommon she certainly made no attempt to hide her name, and the stationer Henry Herringman knew whom to contact when he wanted to bring out a London edition of *Pompey* (see Chapter Five).

The *Letters to Poliarchus* have been read as if they give straightforward access to 'the real Katherine Philips', her personal doubts and fears, and that they can therefore tell us the 'truth' about her identity as an author.[7] Such a reading discounts the fact that all writing is governed

by specific conventions, and that in the case of a mid-seventeenth-century woman these conventions included the requirement that she apologise for daring to take up the pen, and find ways to excuse her boldness. We would therefore expect to find, as we do, that the *Letters*, written to her important political ally and sponsor Charles Cotterell, are preoccupied largely with finding ways to justify writing as a 'female' activity. The *Letters to Poliarchus* indeed provide material for a fascinating study of the process through which 'Orinda' is constructed and refined throughout the correspondence, making it possible for Philips to write and gain wide public acclaim while disavowing any desire to do either. Orinda can also humbly request advice and guidance from Cotterell with her translation of *Pompée*, whilst blithely continuing to follow her own judgement when he disagrees with her.

There are many examples of this in the *Letters*. The most extended is found in a long-drawn-out discussion of one word in her translation: the word 'effort', at that time seen as a French term not an English one. Cotterell counselled her to omit the word, and the subsequent correspondence continued for some months. There was every reason for Philips to take Cotterell's advice and change her text. He was, after all, a recognised linguist and translator. However, although she finally asks Cotterell to change the text himself, the word appears unaltered in the published version. Part of the justification for her consistency, which might have been seen as unfeminine stubbornness, is that she is leaving the word alone at the insistence of another eminent man and writer, Roger Boyle. She tells Cotterell,

> I would fain have made use of your correction, and thrown away 'effort', but my Lord Orrery would absolutely have it continued; and so it is, to please his humour, though against my will and judgement too.
>
> (*Letters*, p. 123)

There is no need to assert her own opinion against Cotterell's. She can cite another male authority instead.

Translation, as defined by Philips in the *Letters*, was a suitably modest undertaking for a woman, the task being to produce a text that kept well within the specific and narrow bounds of the original. This restrictive format could then be used, however, to vindicate her own expertise, and to criticise judiciously the work of others. This is demonstrated strikingly in Philips's detailed analysis of 'what chiefly disgusts me' (p. 179) in a rival translation of *Pompée* undertaken by a group of men. Her comments become so scathing as to strain the limits of self-effacement, and her letter criticising the men's translation ends

with the necessary retraction: 'I really think the worst of their lines equal to the best in my translation' (p. 180). [. . .]

The best-known of Philips's *Letters to Poliarchus* is the one most centrally concerned in producing the image of the poetess that has come down to us. It appears as part of the preface to the posthumous, 1667 edition of the poems, having been written after Richard Marriot had brought out a surreptitious edition from an imperfect manuscript early in 1664. Cotterell hurried to suppress the edition, and Philips's letter refers to this with gratitude. The letter has been read, as the editor of the posthumous edition no doubt designed, as clear proof of the poet's diffidence.[8] In the 1667 edition of *Poems* the letter lies framed by his assertion of her bashfulness and self-effacement, directing the reader how to interpret it. Much is made of her description of herself as someone 'who never writ any line in my life with an intention to have it printed'. Printing Philips might have been nervous about: it could in no way be construed as a feminine act. She was not, however, averse to having her writings published in a more traditional way. This letter, which finally was printed, was not the 'private' communication it is presented as, but was designed for a public audience. In a covering note, which is not included in the 1667 preface, Philips urges Cotterell to 'show it to anybody that suspects my ignorance and innocence of that false edition of my verses' (p. 34).[9] The greatest danger, indeed, was that she might be suspected of the same kind of scheming that many male authors practised: of having arranged the appearance of this incomplete edition as a way of testing how it would be received, before fully committing herself to it in public. Those with long memories would know, after all, that some of her works had already appeared in print, in 1651 and 1657. If her identity as the acclaimed translator of *Pompey* was also known or suspected despite its anonymous publication, such a consequence was likely, and would do irreparable damage to her carefully sculpted public image.

It is worth noting that Katherine Philips had other objections to the surreptitious printing of her poems, which she also mentions in the published letter. Since she died before the 1667 *Poems* appeared, it is impossible to know how she would have re-edited the text, but it is clear that there are many variants between the editions. The most obvious change is that the 1667 edition contains some fifty-five poems, and the two play translations, not found in the earlier text. Many of the omitted poems were written in Ireland, which suggests that the manuscript used by Marriot was an early one, perhaps an early draft, since some verses also scan badly. In addition, the absence of some lines and inclusion of nonsense verses suggests that it was illegible in places. The reader of the surreptitious edition would get an impression of the poet's skill far inferior to that provided by the amended text.[10]

So what kind of poetry was written under the name of Orinda? Katherine Philips was a royalist and High Church Anglican whose immediate family included many important parliamentarians and Independents. Having been born and educated in London, the daughter of a wealthy merchant, John Fowler, she had moved to Wales to join her mother by the time she was fifteen. Her father had died, and her mother was remarried to a prominent parliamentarian, Richard Phillipps. In August 1648, at the age of sixteen, Katherine was wedded to a fifty-four-year-old relative of Sir Richard's, James Philips of Tregibby and The Priory, Cardigan.[11] James was called to the Barebones Parliament in 1653, and served locally as a commissioner for sequestration.

During the 1650s, the political differences between husband and wife seem to have become known, and Colonel John Jones apparently attempted to discredit James Philips by publishing some writing of Katherine's. Her poem addressed to her husband on this occasion is fascinating. While expressing remorse and admitting she had undermined her spouse's reputation, she in no way promises to alter her opinions. Indeed, the poem is in fact a statement of her separateness from him, and a call for her to be assessed as an independent being, not as a part of her husband. At one level, there is nothing indecorous in these lines, as she is asking that her husband be considered free from her guilt. At another, she asserts that from the first, from the time of Adam and Eve, women and men should be regarded as autonomous, each responsible for their own actions. Even her enemy's wife, she maintains, need not be treated as though she agreed with Colonel Jones's opinions (Jones's wife indeed differed from him politically).[12] Under a legal system where the husband and wife were assumed to be one person, the husband, this is a quietly radical statement.

To Antenor, on a Paper of mine which J.J. threatens to publish to prejudice him.

Must then my crimes become thy scandal too?
Why, sure the devil hath not much to do.
The weakness of the other charge is clear,
When such a trifle must bring up the rear.
But this is mad design, for who before
Lost his repute upon another's score?
My love and life I must confess are thine,
But not my errors, they are only mine.
And if my faults must be for thine allowed,
It will be hard to dissipate the cloud:
For Eve's rebellion did not Adam blast,

Until himself forbidden fruit did taste.
'Tis possible this magazine of hell
(Whose name would turn a verse into a spell,
Whose mischief is congenial to his life)
May yet enjoy an honourable wife.
Nor let his ill be reckoned as her blame,
Nor yet my follies blast Antenor's name.

(*Poems*, 1667, p. 47)

This poem to Antenor was not the only one Philips wrote on this occasion. She also addressed one to her close friend, Anne Owen, 'the truly competent judge of honour, Lucasia', asking her to believe in her untainted honesty. This appeal to Lucasia's support is unsurprising. Philips's solution to finding herself surrounded by those whose political and religious beliefs contrasted sharply with her own had been to establish her Society of Friendship. The friends admitted to this select band were all royalists, and their correspondence and companionship must have done much to offset her isolation. Naming herself 'Orinda', she gave similar pastoral-sounding names to her friends, and addressed poetry to them which uses the language and imagery of courtly love conventions.[13] Some of the Society's members have not been identified, but their number seems to have included Anne Owen (Lucasia), Mary Aubrey (Rosania), Francis Finch (Palaemon) the brother of the philosopher Anne Conway, John Birkenhead (Cratander), Sir Edward Dering (Silvander), Lady Mary Cavendish (Policrite), James Philips (Antenor) and Sir Charles Cotterell (Poliarchus). (Those added after the Restoration, when the Society of Friendship presumably changed somewhat, included Anne Boyle – Valeria – and Elizabeth Boyle – Celimena – relatives of the diarist and autobiographer Mary Rich.)

In general, the extant poems that she addresses to these friends make few overt comments on state politics. (Almost all her explicitly royalist poems were written after the Restoration.) During the 1650s, addressing issues of state politics was far more common among women sectaries than their more conservative sisters. Affairs of government were supposed to be beyond the realm of proper female concern, and in her lines deploring the execution of Charles I Philips found it necessary to assert that, in general, women should leave public issues well alone. Only with the whole world order upset by the 'murder' of the monarch, she asserts in 'Upon the Double Murther', could the unfeminine act of commenting on affairs of state be excused.

Philips's poems on solitude, retreat and the country life, however, also reveal her royalism. Maren-Sofie Røstvig has shown how the defeated royalists in their rural exiles took up classical images of contentment and virtue in the countryside.[14] The controlled and

balanced happy man, contemptuous of the fervent battles of the political world, was their answer to the Puritan image of the committed Christian warrior. Henry Vaughan and Abraham Cowley both wrote in this vein, and both men were known by Philips. The writings of Saint-Amant were also incorporated into this tradition in England, and Philips was familiar with his work, translating his 'La Solitude'.

Her poetry shows many signs of commitment to this philosophy of retirement, wherein submission and acceptance of limitations are heralded as positive and necessary virtues. Many of the poems which in other respects are widely different from one another are characterised by advocacy of contentment or confinement or restriction, and the assertion that true freedom and choice can be found through this. (These include, for instance, 'A Sea-Voyage from Tenby to Bristol', 'To my dear Sister Mrs C.P. on her Marriage', 'Happiness' and 'Upon the Graving of her Name Upon a Tree in Barnelmes Walk'.) These sentiments would have been deeply familiar to Philips's royalist contemporaries.

There is, however, a radical difference between Katherine Philips's situation and that of her fellow-poets. They were men, and their retirement from affairs of state was a recent change in circumstances, and in some cases self-imposed. Philips was a woman. Her residence in the countryside was due to the fact that she had to be with her husband. She had no choice in the matter, and no hope that this apparently natural state of affairs had ever been different, or could ever be changed. This is most poignantly apparent in the many poems written on parting from one of her close women friends. Orinda recommends a stoical acceptance of separation, claiming that only through such a resignation of will can true self-determination be found. The way in which the parting is experienced, she argues, is something that friends do have control over, and this is where their freedom lies. This gives a very special inflexion to the traditional courtly love motif of separation from a beloved. Only by giving this particular extension to notions of self-control and contentment under compulsion could Katherine Philips find a way to maintain some autonomy, living as she was surrounded by her political enemies, people who had legal control over her existence. In 'Parting with Lucasia: A Song' this theme is especially interesting because Philips suggests that through resignation women can become 'conquerors at home'. The double meaning in this phrase – it can be read both as 'conquerors of ourselves' and 'conquerors in the house' – shows how, for this woman poet, a measure of self-determination could be achieved. If women can control their grief at being separated from one another, she argues, any task is slight by comparison, and can be performed. The poem ends

Nay then to meet we may conclude,
  And all obstructions overthrow,
Since we our passion have subdued,
  Which is the strongest thing I know.

(pp. 65–6)

About half of Philips's poems are concerned with love and friendship. The great majority of these address the theme of intimacy between women, exploring its delights and problems. This anatomisation and celebration of female closeness is made in direct defiance of the accepted view of women. Although from its earliest days the language and themes of courtly love poetry had been used to glorify friendships between men, women's relationships with one another had never been treated to such serious consideration in print.[15] Orinda's response to this nonsense is unequivocal.

If souls no sexes have, for men t'exclude
  Women from friendship's vast capacity,
Is a design injurious or rude,
  Only maintained by partial tyranny.
Love is allowed to us and innocence,
And noblest friendships do proceed from thence.

(p. 95)

It is entirely characteristic that she should argue that qualities normally attributed to women are the very features that most fit them to move outside the conventional requirements.

The courtly love conventions are an important and frequent feature of Orinda's poetry. In some poems, she adopts wholesale the stance and language of the frustrated lover, wooing a merciless mistress. An integral part of this tradition was the poem renouncing love, and Philips's works include a wholly conventional example of this kind, 'Against Love'. Addressed to Cupid, the poem includes stock references to lovers burning and raving and the 'killing frown' of the mistress who provides only diseased joys. What is unusual is for such a renunciation of love to be made by a woman. By writing from the position usually reserved for the male lover, the woman poet gains access for herself to the power and freedom that were usually enjoyed only by men in love relationships. Traditionally, this poetry, while lamenting the control wielded by the mistress over her lover through her 'killing frown', nonetheless gives voice only to the lover, who explores and revels in his (usual) 'subjugation' to the mistress's gentle charms. The price that Philips pays for this access to male speech in at least some of her poems is that she is limited thereby to the kinds

of relationship allowed by this essentially male tradition. Some of the poems addressed to Mary Aubrey include a great deal of this conventional language, and are restricted to situations taken directly from the courtly love tradition. Since one of the fundamental assumptions of this poetry is that the beloved object is an exception to the general run of womankind and infinitely superior to other females, this can have the result of deprecating other women. Such is the case in 'Rosania shadowed whilst Mrs Mary Aubrey'.

> Unlike those gallants which take far less care
> To have their souls, than make their bodies fair;
> Who (sick with too much leisure) time do pass
> With these two books, pride and a looking-glass:
> Plot to surprise men's hearts, their power to try,
> And call that love, which is mere vanity.
> But she, although the greatest murtherer,
> (For every glance commits a massacre)
> Yet glories not that slaves her power confess,
> But wishes that her monarchy were less.
>
> (pp. 48–9)

Many of Orinda's poems, however, rigorously rework these conventions, giving them new meanings that express a particularly female perspective. In 'A Dialogue betwixt Lucasia, and Rosania, Imitating that of Gentle Thyrsis', Lucasia is a shepherdess and Rosania the wooer who tries to persuade her to leave the flocks and go away with her (pp. 126–7). Lucasia explains that she would much rather leave with Rosania, given the choice, but must stay where her duty lies. The poem presents loving friendship between women as the part of their lives that is characterised by choice and freedom, but prevented from blossoming by the duties of female existence: 'Lucasia: Such are thy charms, I'd dwell within thine arms / Could I my station choose.' The poem, like many in the tradition from which it springs, looks forward to a final union after death.

> Rosania: Then whilst we live, this joy let's take and give,
> Since death us soon will sever.
> Lucasia: But I trust, when crumbled into dust,
> We shall meet and love for ever.

These lines echo another dialogue, 'A Dialogue of Absence 'Twixt Lucasia and Orinda, set by Mr Henry Lawes', which ends in a chorus anticipating a future where women will no longer be forced to part by other concerns: 'But we shall come where no rude hand shall sever,/ And there we'll meet and part no more for ever'· (p. 26).

Some of the most interesting of Katherine Philips's poems take particular images from the received patterns and rework them. In doing so, Philips both shows that relationships between women are different from those between men and women, and implicitly criticises her male poetic sources. A notable instance of this is her reworking of John Donne's famous 'compasses' image in his 'A Valediction: forbidding Mourning'.

> If they be two, they are two so
> As stiff twin compasses are two,
> Thy soul the fixed foot, makes no show
> To move, but doth, if th'other do.
>
> And though it in the centre sit,
> Yet when the other far doth roam,
> It leans, and hearkens after it,
> And grows erect, as that comes home.
>
> Such wilt thou be to me, who must
> Like th'other foot, obliquely run;
> Thy firmness makes my circle just,
> And makes me end, where I begun.

This has been praised as the expression of all-transcendent love. A quick and simple feminist reading, however, would point out how the compasses actually celebrate woman's immobility and fixity in 'the centre', and man's freedom to move and still be loved. It is the male 'foot' that roams: the female can only lean in sympathy with it. Katherine Philips's response to these lines seems to involve the same analysis. 'To my dearest Lucasia' celebrates love between women. It describes an emblem that could be used to represent the relationship, and uses an image of compasses to describe equal freedom and equal control.

> The compasses that stand above
> Express this great immortal love:
> For friends, like them, can prove this true,
> They are, and yet they are not, two.
>
> And in their posture is expressed
> Friendship's exalted interest:
> Each follows where the other leans,
> And what each does, this other means.
>
> And as when one foot does stand fast,
> And t'other circles seeks to cast,

The steady part does regulate
And make the wanderer's motion straight:

So friends are only two in this,
T'reclaim each other when they miss:
For whosoe'er will grossly fall,
Can never be a friend at all.

Katherine Philips's poetry provides a developing definition of female friendship. One of its most fundamental characteristics – and one which by implication must exclude men from this greatest intimacy with women – is that women friends are so alike that they mirror one another. This idea appears explicitly, for instance, in 'A Friend'.

Thick waters show no images of things;
Friends are each other's mirrors, and should be
Clearer than crystal or the mountain springs,
And free from clouds, design or flattery,
For vulgar souls no part of friendship share:
Poets and friends are born to what they are.

(p. 94)

A comparison with a poem addressed to her husband, 'To my dearest Antenor, on his Parting', illustrates how very different this essentially equal relationship is from marriage. Philips-as-wife is her husband's image, passively reflecting him. There is no equal mirroring here.

And besides this thou shalt in me survey
Thyself reflected while thou art away . . .
So in my breast thy picture drawn shall be.
My guide, life, object, friend, and destiny:
And none shall know, though they employ their wit,
Which is the right Antenor, thou, or it.

(pp. 76–7)

Even though she calls Antenor her friend, the relationship defined here is quite different from the one she celebrates with women who are close to her.

Orinda's most extended exposition of the argument that women's friendship has a special and superior quality is the poem 'To my Excellent Lucasia, on our Friendship'. This moves from the opening 'I' of the first stanzas to the exultant, united 'we' of the final one. The friendship, through mirroring and recognition of similarity, gives joy and peace that is found in no other relationship – certainly not in the 'bridegroom's mirth'.

I did not live until this time
Crowned my felicity,
When I could say without a crime,
I am not thine, but thee.

This carcase breathed, and walked, and slept,
So that the world believed
There was a soul the motions kept:
But they were all deceived.

For as a watch by art is wound
To motion, such was mine:
But never had Orinda found
A soul till she found thine;

Which now inspires, cures and supplies,
And guides my darkened breast:
For thou art all that I can prize,
My joy, my life, my rest.

No bridegroom's nor crown-conqueror's mirth
To mine compared can be:
They have but pieces of this earth,
I've all the world in thee.

Then let our flames still light and shine,
And no false fear control,
As innocent as our design,
Immortal as our soul.

(pp. 51–2)

Marriage contains elements of duty and compulsion. Struggling to resolve the conflict between wifely submission and passionate friendship, and accept that she cannot change her situation, Katherine Philips asks her dearest friend to be patient with her imperfections. She reflects on the divine essence of friendship, claiming that in its origins the relationship is superhuman. True friendship should consist of harmony and freedom, and she laments that, in her human imperfection, she is seeking to control and possess her friend. In a world where so many imperative demands were made of them, women seek, she says, to allow perfect liberty to one another in this most perfect of relationships. Having described the state she aspires to, she sighs,

But what's all this to me, who live to be
Disprover of my own morality?
And he that knew my unimproved soul,
Would say I meant all friendship to control
But bodies move in time, and so must minds;

And though th'attempt no easy progress finds,
Yet quit me not, lest I should desperate grow,
And to such friendship add some patience now.

(pp. 58–9)

The range and themes of Katherine Philips's poetry show the ways in which a woman whose religious and political allegiances placed her outside the sisterhood of the radical sects could negotiate a space of autonomy for herself and her female friends. She was a tremendously important reference point for contemporary High Church women. Her translation *Pompey* was greeted with overwhelming joy by an Irishwoman who signs herself simply 'Philo-Philippa'. The terms of this praise illustrate the fact that Orinda's spirited defence of women's friendship was not lost on the women of her times.

Let the male poets their male Phoebus choose,
Thee I invoke, Orinda, for my muse;
He could but force a branch, Daphne her tree
Most freely offers to her sex and thee,
And says to verse, so unconstrained as yours,
Her laurel freely comes, your fame secures:
And men no longer shall with ravished bays
Crown their forced poems by as forced a praise.
. . .
That sex, which heretofore was not allowed
To understand more than a beast, or crowd;
Of which problems were made, whether or no
Women had souls; but to be damned, if so;
Whose highest contemplation could not pass,
In men's esteem, no higher than the glass;
And all the painful labours of their brain,
Was only how to dress and entertain:
Or, if they ventured to speak sense, the wise
Made that, and speaking ox, like prodigies.
From these thy more than masculine pen hath reared
Our sex; first to be praised, next to be feared.
And by the same pen forced, men now confess,
To keep their greatness, was to make us less . . .
Ask me not then, why jealous men debar
Our sex from books in peace, from arms in war;
It is because our parts will soon demand
Tribunals for our persons, and command.
. . .
That noble friendship brought thee to our coast,
We thank Lucasia, and thy courage boast.

Death in each wave could not Orinda fright,
Fearless she acts that friendship she did write:
Which manly virtue to their sex confined,
Thou rescuest to confirm our softer mind;
For there's required (to do that virtue right)
Courage, as much in friendship as in fight.
The dangers we despise, doth this truth prove,
Though boldly we not fight, we boldly love . . .
Thus, as the sun, you in your course shine on,
Unmoved with all our admiration:
Flying above the praise you shun, we see
Wit is still higher by humility.[16]

Philips's poetry was also an essential reference point for women poets who followed her. Many of those writing later in the seventeenth century, including Aphra Behn, Anne Killigrew, Ephelia and Jane Barker, refer to her as their guide. In the post-Restoration world, where acceptable female behaviour was again being narrowly defined, she was an important example that it was possible for a woman to be praised for her writing, as long as she was sufficiently modest in her claims. While helping to open a pathway into print for women, therefore, she also staked it out as a strait and narrow way. Through the critics' appraisals, 'the matchless Orinda' became the scourge of such followers as the 'incomparable Astrea', Aphra Behn.

Notes

1. The author was working in 1988 on a study of seventeenth-century women's sexuality. It is acknowledged that the use of the term 'lesbian' when discussing this period is contentious.
2. *Letters from Orinda to Poliarchus* was published in 1705, 1714, 1729. An anonymous poem of Philips's appeared in Tottel's *Miscellany* in 1716 and 1727. She is praised in Dryden's poem to Anne Killigrew, which was published in 1693, 1701, 1716, 1727, and reference was made to her in 1743 by the anonymous satirist who wrote *The Crooked Sixpence*. Her poems appear in *Poems by Eminent Ladies*, 1757. In 1764 her achievements were noted by David Erskine in *Biographia Dramatica*. In 1776 William King praised her in *The Art of Love*, and in 1780 John Nicolls reprinted William Temple's *Elegy* on her, appending a biographical note. Articles also appeared in *Theatrum Poetarum* 1800 and 1812, and *Biographia Dramatica* 1782, 1812. In 1861 she was mentioned in Jane Williams's *The Literary Women of England*. Edmund Gosse's *Seventeenth-Century Studies* mentioned her in 1883, and John Aubrey's *Brief Lives* in 1898. 1904 saw the beginning of the 'Orinda Booklets', a series which opened with L.I. Guiney's edition of a selection of Philips's poems. Thorn-Drury's *A Little Ark*, 1921, included

J.C.'s *Elegy* on her. In many of these instances, some familiarity with her work is assumed, so reference to her was clearly much wider than this.

3. Marjorie Plant, *The English Book Trade: An Economic History of the Making and Sale of Books* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1965); David Vieth, *Attribution in Restoration Poetry: A Study of Rochester's 'Poems' of 1680* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963).
4. Jeremy Taylor, *A Discourse of the Nature, Offices, and Measures of Friendship*, 1657, p. 9.
5. William Roberts, 'The Dating of Orinda's French Translations', *Philological Quarterly*, 49, 1970.
6. Philips chose this prologue and epilogue from many others offered to her, *Letters from Orinda to Poliarchus*, pp. 119–20.
7. See, for example, Philip Souers, *The Matchless Orinda* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1931).
8. The editor was probably Charles Cotterell. The edition was entered in the *Stationers' Register* on the same day as Cotterell's *Relation of the Defeating of Cardinal Mazarin* (21 January 1667).
9. She also refers to an earlier surreptitious edition of some of her poetry in *Letters to Poliarchus*, p. 127: 'I am sure it [*Pompey*] will be as false printed as was my copy of verses to the queen'. I have been unable to identify this text, and believe it might have been a Dublin imprint.
10. Lines were omitted in 1664 from 'On the Fair Weather just at the Coronation'; 'To the Noble Palaemon on his Incomparable Discourse of Friendship'; 'To My Dear Sister Mrs C.P. on her Marriage'. Significant variations between editions affect, for instance, 'Friendship'; 'To the Queen's Majesty'; 'In Memory of F.P.'; 'In Memory of that Excellent Person, Mrs Mary Lloyd'. See also Paul Elmen, 'Some Manuscript Poems by the Matchless Orinda', *Philological Quarterly*, 30, 1951; Catherine Mambretti, '"Fugitive Papers": A New Orinda Poem', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 71, 1977.
11. I suspect she was brought in as a stepmother for James's nine-month-old daughter, Frances.
12. Richard Greaves and Robert Zaller, *Biographical Dictionary of English Radicals* (Brighton: Harvester, 1982).
13. Souers, op. cit., argues that the Society of Friendship was limited to women, but a letter to Lucasia from Dering quoted in William Clark, *The Early Irish Stage: the Beginnings to 1720* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 51, shows that men were included. I agree with Souers, though, that relationships with women are celebrated with more intensity than those with men.
14. Maren-Sofie Røstvig, *The Happy Man: Studies in the Metamorphoses of a Classical Ideal* (Oslo: Norwegian Universities Press, 1962).
15. Jeremy Taylor, op. cit., pp. 88–9 and Martin Kornbluth, 'Friendship and Fashion: The Dramatic Treatment of Friendship in the Restoration and Eighteenth Century', unpublished PhD thesis, Pennsylvania State University, 1956.
16. In *Letters to Poliarchus*, p. 124, Philips reports receiving an adulatory poem by an unknown woman; this is probably that one.

4 Excusing the Breach of Nature's Laws: The Discourse of Denial and Disguise in Katherine Philips' Friendship Poetry*

Celia A. Easton

Both Easton and Hobby uncover in Philips' friendship poetry a disguised female discourse which privileges emotional and perhaps erotic bonds between women. Hobby's reading accords with her theory of Philips's carefully sculpted public persona: by deploying an acceptably 'feminine' subject matter, Philips constructed an escape route from marital subjection without appearing to do so. Easton's theory of two rival textual voices leaves less room for autonomy. Femininity in her reading is less a strategic role than a powerful, constraining discourse imprinted on Philips's poetry, which seeks (and fails) to suppress any engagement with the political and physical world. The tension of repression which Easton detects in Philips's verse points to both the ideological pressures which shaped her identity and her resistance of those culturally assigned meanings. While Hobby's reading facilitates Philips's enlistment into the ranks of early feminists, Easton's underlines a more ambivalent relationship to the patriarchal dictates which Philips struggled to embody and strained against.

In his preface to the first authorized edition of Katherine Philips' *Poems*, her editor and confidant, Charles Cotterell, praises the poems that follow by attempting to situate them beyond gender, beyond history, beyond language, beyond geography, and beyond mortal existence:

> Some of them would be no disgrace to the name of any man that amongst us is most esteemed for his excellency in this kind, and there are none that may not pass with favour, when it is remembred that they fell hastily from the pen but of a Woman. We might well have

* Reprinted from *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660–1700*, 14, no. 1 (Spring, 1990), pp. 1–14.