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<https://doi.org/10.15760/honors.122>

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That Mysterious, Remisse Knot:
Katherine Philips's Unincorporated Fraternity

by

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An undergraduate honors thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Arts

in

University Honors

and

English

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2015

“There is probably a tremendous invisible curve and stellar orbit in which our different ways and goals may be included as small stretches—let us rise to his thought!

(Nietzsche qtd in Love 99).

Introduction

Debates since the 1980s on the poetry of Anglo-Welsh Katherine Philips (1632-64) swing widely. Philips has been labeled as a writer of “innocent little verses about her private life in Wales” while she is more recently held as a poet of politics and sexuality—a radical appropriator of masculine royalist and friendship politics.¹ Alongside these critical shifts in approaches to reading women’s literature, Philips’s friendship poetry has received considerable attention in queer histories. Debates in the early 2000’s—in a calm after a Foucauldian wake—attempted to figure Philips into a history of homoerotic suspicion, reading in Philips a potential eroticism of textual embodiment. This possibly suspicious, publically significant version of Philips is a far cry from the homonormative, lesbian continuum Lillian Faderman positions Philips within in her 1981 *Surpassing the Love of Men*. Faderman figures an innocent Philips whose constructions of immaterial erotics only have future (modern) political implications.²

Heather Love offers that Faderman’s “idealized image of passionate, gender-separatist, and possibly-maybe sexual relations between women did not survive the sex wars of the 1980s or the general darkening in tone of the lesbian representations of the 1990s” (75-6). I do not wish to return Philips to an un-disturbed and non-disturbing harbor of chaste innocence. Nor do I want to dismiss the work of critical configurations that show both male and female writers as jointly performing the ideological work of the white, liberal middle class.³ Instead, I offer a

¹ Scott-Baumann, Elizabeth. *Forms of Engagement : Women, Poetry and Culture, 1640-1680* (p.81)

² particularly for lesbian-identified educated, English-speaking women of the 1980s.

³ Milette Shamir. *Inexpressible Privacy : The Interior Life of Antebellum American Literature* (p. 16).

return to the notion of innocence in Philips's friendship poems. In a step back from attempts to erect a sexually radical Philips, I wonder what rooted formulations of suspicion are already in place and activated by Philips's writing, rather than by our histories. Looking closely at Philips's rhetorical constructions of friendship and chastity, I highlight Philips's use of feminine mutability as associated with a strange paradox of agency and wantonness. Wary of positioning Philips as in taciturn agreement with misogynist discourses, I conclude that even if Philips can be seen as (innocently) cataloguing virtues and vices, the product is not a portrayal of her characters as "uncomplicated subjects." Instead of reading in Philips complicity with ideologies of control, we might see, *within* a kind of complicity, an imaginative poesis of detachment through a language of restraint, obedience and control. Philips's friendship takes the mutable, flattering feminine to an autonomous stage. She does not remove the cause, or the fact of pervasive, misogynist discursive bands, but instead assigns the reins to a natural friendship wherein members should "court [their] own captivity/[rather than] thrones more great and innocent."⁴

The Seal: Friendship in Emblem Only

In her 1981 discussion of Renaissance friendship in *Surpassing the Love of Men*, Faderman asserts that though Philips "borrows heavily from the early seduction poems of John Donne" (70), she writes exclusively "about a spiritual union manifested through verbal declarations and noble actions alone" (71). Discussions of Philip's Neoplatonic, spiritual emphasis continue. For example, Sajed Ali Chowdhury's *Dissident Metaphysics in Renaissance Women's Poetry* (2012) explains that Philips stresses the spiritual to create "a dissident female metaphysic that

⁴ Philips: "Friendship's Mysterys, to my dearest Lucasia" (16-20).

destabilizes the ‘dominant’ masculinist metaphysic of Donne” (4). Chowdhury argues that Philips specifically-female souls can exist separately from the world of men (3). ⁵Philips’s Donnian influence is not subtle. His compass conceit that portrays two lover’s souls in movement of mathematical “twin compasses”—(the two legs of the compass), is not only borrowed by Philips but it is used in her coterie’s emblem. Patrick Thomas’s introduction in *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips: The Matchless Orinda Vol. I* explains that “Orinda’s Society was later to have its own seal showing the emblem of friendship, two flaming hearts entwined with a pair of compasses” (3). But Philips’s souls are in a different relationship to one another. Borrowing while deviating from Chowdhury’s discussions of Donne’s “dominant’ masculinist metaphysic” and Philips’s Neoplatonic influences, I hold that Philips’s friends are fixedly separated, rather than fixed or connected *during* separation.

Donne’s “A Valediction: forbidding morning” describes lovers’ who cannot be fully separated in parting.

If they be two, they are two so

As stiffe twin compasses are two,

Thy soule the fixt foot, makes no show

To move, but doth, if the’other doe.

⁵ Even the small fact that Philips’s coterie included men challenges this (common) tendency to gender Philips friendship as exclusively female. However *feminine* her version, saying she is intentionally making a women-only friendship minimizes the extent to which her poems argue for the *incorporation* of women—the right for women to use friendship’s masculine rhetoric, and to essentially be virtuous—that is, manly. This is not to say that Philips does not overtly argue against misogynist perceptions of women. E.g. see “To Sir Amorous La Foole”’s critique of the male gaze.

And though it in the center sit,

Yet when the other far doth come,

It leans, and hearkens after it,

And grows erect, as that comes home. (25-32) (Qtd. in Targoff 74).

The poem begins with their intellectual *and* corporal connection: “Inter-assured of the mind,/Care lesse, eyes, lips, and hands to misse” (19-20). Their body parts connect, and will be disjointed, but they will “care lesse” of that inaccessibility because they have an intellectual assurance of their connection. The poem also speaks from a pre-parted state. The speaker requests: “Though I must goe, endure not yet/A breach, but an expansion” (22-23). Ramie Targoff points out that importantly, “at the end of the quatrain, Donne’s foot ‘comes home. . . ‘Home’ is what lies on the other side of parting” (75).⁶ These lovers, like spiritual friends, have the strength to endure parting as “an expansion”. Spiritual friends are tested in this way during life, to later supposedly conquer the great separation of death. For Donne, and friends, enduring, in contrast with “mourning”, is to withstand. The ultimate emphasis is on the lovers’ strength.

In Philips’s conceit, the two begin as souls together—bodies apart, already “free from lower ends”.

For Joyn'd and growing, both in one.

Neither can be disturb'd alone.

⁶ Targoff notes that the compass metaphor—“the single metaphor perhaps most deeply associated with Donne’s poetry—was not in fact his invention” (74). Targoff suggests it is borrowed from the Italian poet Giovanni Battista Guarino, who’s poem positions the speaker as both parts of the compass: “I am like the compass,/Fixing one foot in you as in my center: the other endures the circlings of fortune/but can by no means fail to circle around you”. Targoff explains this in contrast to Guarino who is depicted as circling continually around his mistress, never mentioning returning to the center” (74-75).

[...]

The hearts are free from lower ends,

For each point to the other tends.

[...]

Warm'd and enlighten'd, not consum'd.

The compasses that stand above

Express this great immortall Love;

For friends, like them, can prove this true.

They are, and yet they are not, two. (3-4, 11-12, 20-24)

Philips's lovers, like Donne's, are also friends who "can prove this true" (23). They endure rather than mourn. But unlike in Donne's "Valediction," Philips does not depict a co-connection between the intellect and the body. However subsidiary Donne's "eyes, lips, and hands" (20), his endurance is a process in between physical touch. Physicality may be base, but necessary; they serve as a kind of point of access or entry. The body is an encasing for the soul, but also a harbor or housing. Philips's friends prove their strength further. They reclaim each other "when they misse" (34) rather than when they are re-united physically.

And in their posture is express'd

Friendship's exalted interest:

Each follows where the other Leanes,

And what each does, the other meanes.

And as when one foot does stand fast,
 And t'other circles seeks to cast.
 The steddy part does regulate
 And make the wanderer's motion streight:

So friends are onely Two in this,
 T'reclaime each other when they misse:
 For whose're will grossely fall.
 Can never be a friend at all. (3-4,11-12, 20-36).

To further flesh out how Philips is reading Donne's compass without physicality, we should linger on her use of "lower ends" (11). Differently than in "Valediction", Philips's friends have already parted. Their hearts are free from their bodies. The first stanza of Donne's "Valediction" describes that his two lovers are distinct in that they are friends:

Dull sublunary lovers love
 (Whose soul is sense) cannot admit
 Absence, because it doth remove
 Those things which elemented it. (13-16)

Philips's "lower ends" plays on Donne's "sublunary lovers" whose connection is purportedly corporally (rather than spiritually) erotic and distinctly not fraternal or platonic. This is not always (though it is occasionally) to say that friendship cannot include eros (and classically,

specifically sex), but platonic love is differentiated in that it is beyond physical consummation.⁷

Heather Love explains:

According to a tradition reaching back to Aristotle, friendship is seen as an autonomous space, as free from the machinations of power as it is from the shocks of desire.

Friendship is understood to be noninstrumental; its lack of a determinate end is one of the main factors distinguishing it from eros. (77-8).

Philips's reading of Donne's "sublunary" would also deem Donne's lovers as engaged in "lower ends". While his lovers overcome the threat of a lower love based in physical engagement, Philips removes the body completely. Her compass conceit exaggerates the Neoplatonic spiritual precedence that holds the body as a harmful distraction or obstruction from spiritual beauty.⁸ For Philips, the threat of consummation exists in terms of any shared physical company.

In *John Donne, Body and Soul*, Ramie Targoff explains that Marsilio Ficino's 1474 *Commentary on Plato's Symposium* is "arguably the most influential and widely read treatment of love in the Renaissance." Ficino "describes 'true love' as 'nothing but a certain urge striving to fly up to the divine beauty, *aroused by the sight of bodily beauty*' (58, emphasis mine). For Ficino and Donne, the body is an instrument of the soul. "Bodily love reflects the unfortunate immersion of the soul in matter" (58). While Donne does not celebrate the body, or arousal, he does not discard its function.

⁷ In Plato's *Symposium*, Socrates discusses the hierarchical differences between a boy and his lover. He explains the optional adoptions of higher and lower ways of living; the higher is marked by control of physical desires. If the test of physical desire is responded to "with modesty and reason", then "the victory goes to the better elements in both their minds, which lead them to follow the assigned regimen of philosophy, [and] their life here below is one of bliss and shared understanding. They are modest and fully in control of themselves now that they have enslaved the part that brought trouble into the soul and set free the part that gave it virtue. After death, when they have grown wings and become weightless, they have won the first of three rounds in these, the true Olympic Contests. There is no greater good than this that either human self-control or divine madness can offer a man" (121). Importantly, the test involves a process wherein the two friends engage in desire in order to overcome it.

⁸ Targoff 58

In Donne's "The Extasie" love assumes a material form⁹ after their souls spend the afternoon having a separate picnic from the lovers' bodies as they lay motionless:

We like sepulchral statues lay;
All day, the same our postures were,
And we said nothing, all the day.¹⁰

While "sublunary" in Valediction describes vulgar lovers who are not friends, Philips uses a next-level kind of vulgar love wherein to "grossely fall" is to meet physically. At the end of "The Extasie", Donne shows the bodies are allies. They are a problem, but they were a help. They brought them together to contact in the first place:

But oh alas, so long, so far,
Our bodies why do we forbear?
They're ours, though they're not we; we are
The intelligences, they the spheres.
We owe them thanks, because they thus
Did us, to us, at first convey,
Yielded their senses' force to us,
Nor are dross to us, but allay. (51-56)

But for Philips, as in "Friendship in Emblem", the friends are already freed from the body. Their physical union—even their introduction is avoided, and along with it, engagement with the possibility of physical instigation or arousal.

Donne preserves a platonic engagement with sexual (bodily) function. Touch is involved in a process that proves his lovers are engaged in higher, philosophical love. The speaker of

⁹ Targoff 59

¹⁰ Amy Greenstadt first brought this to my attention.

“Valediction” explains that the lovers are the “intelligences” while their bodies are not them, but theirs; “they are the spheres” (51-52). Donne’s bodies are a necessary material representation of the heavens: “a globe or other construction illustrating the place and motions of the celestial bodies” (“sphere” OED 1b.).

Conversely, Philips holds that her friends are spherical intelligences. Their soul and intellect is all their form and their place and motions are emphatically celestial. Their home, or harbor is not corporal. Her souls will not float in picnic to return to their bodies at the end of the day, but are instead in perpetual orbit. Chowdhury argues that Philips, unlike Donne, does not specify who in the compass conceit wanders. She shows that Philips’s compass has no fixed foot and that the speaker and the friend mutually support each other. According to Chowdhury, Philips extends Donne’s metaphysical theory by focusing only on the moving essence of the female soul, body and mind (3-4). While I hold that the only body she references is, like the anatomical metaphor of the heart, in this case “the head” (52) which functions like a free-floating brain without a body (and is not necessarily gendered by Philips), I follow that Philips’s characters lack of home (body). This lack positions her friends’ souls in motion. The motion is perpetual and so is distinct from male-male or female-male depictions of friendship.

Erotics in Re-vision

In discarding the body, Philips’s does not do away with the importance of process in her version of friendship. “Friendship in Emblem” discussed above depicts friends who express their strength and steadfastness by being in a state of always-overcoming, but even that permanent state is not static. Laurie Shannon explains that texts of friendship are “[m]etaphorical, approximated, comparative, and, as it were, virtual: likeness remains an imaginative process or

poesis” (21). Friendship posited a model for participants to read and project an inner experience of paradoxical self-sufficiency contingent on engagement with another. Beyond that they are in a perpetually separate motion, how are Philips’s friends *engaged*? Or, while they are connectedly orbiting apart, what are Philips’s friends *doing*?

In one central respect, her characters are writing. Before the brain could float off in community (the soul-sphere ascending to its heaven-on-earthly realm of activity), Philips describes remembrances of togetherness in terms of past written declarations of friendship. Declaration functions as an access point similar to Donne’s bodies. Donne’s bodies will intermittently touch; Philips’s paper bodies are a similar conduit, equally base and necessary, however given a more elevated function. Her “bodies” are expressions of intelligences, circulated in letter or manuscript; they are an intelligent sphere rather than an encasing for the “lower” body.

Ficino’s description of “true love” as “aroused by the sight of bodily beauty” has a textual shift in Philips. Friendship’s central process of withstanding desire is instigated in words. “To my Lucasia, in defense of declared friendship” discusses the source of friendships’ gains in writing:

O! my Lucasia, let us speak our Love
 And think not that impertinent can be.
 Which to us both does such assurance prove,
 - And whence we find how Justly we agree.

Before we knew the, treasures of our Love,
 Our noble ayms our Joys did entertain;

And shall enjoyment nothing them improve?

'Twere best for us then to begin again! (1-8)

Speech and declaration becomes the form, the guise, their souls must wear. It is the stage or medium on which they work out the reality that their souls are imprisoned by flesh:

Although we know we love, yet while our soule

Is thus imprison'd by the flesh we wear.

There's no way left that bondage to controule,

But to convey transactions through the Eare. (29-32)

Instead of the body's urges—aspects of corporality—that need to be controlled and tempered, the speaker's whole body-self is a threat and must be overcome.

Restraint is the basis for friendship's intimacy, and the process of declaration is the act of souls keeping company. "Letters and visits" are nothing without declaration. Like Donne's physical touch without the union of spirits or intelligences, Philips's speaker positions letters and visits without declarations of friendship in terms of "sublunary" physical contact. Expression is what "Seal"s (from "Friendship in Emblem") or "soe"s the friendship package:

'Tis not distrust; for were that plea allow'd.

Letters and visits all would useless grow:

Love's whole expression then would be its Cloud;

And it would be refin'd to nothing soe. (57-60)

This important process—the soul's activity, is a guise—a dressing of the soul in words. It is a process equated with friendship's reflection—its mirrors or looks. In friendship's traditional rhetoric "looks" indicate a physical process that marks the friend's desire to see safety and assurance, trust and equality. (In the Renaissance this is often discussed in terms of honest

speech and political dealings.) Platonic and Neoplatonist notions of mirroring expresses itself in multiple Renaissance literary forms, particularly in the Pastoral that Philips can be seen to draw from foremost from her coterie use of pen names borrowed from Pastoral romances. Thomas's introduction offers that:

Pastoral sobriquets were useful in avoiding unwanted attention from the censors as well as protests from those of the poet's subjects who might feel their privacy breached in a manner unbefitting the gentry.

Orinda probably found it necessary to shield the individuals she wrote to and about before she required a mask for herself. (8)

Philips's pastoral pennames had a practical function, while Thomas also notes that "[l]engthy pastoral romances had been popular, especially with women readers ever since the first publication of Sidney's *Arcadia* in 1590" and "Orinda's friends were equally interested in the French romances" (9). Leonard Hinds explains the important themes of mirroring and disguise in his discussion of d'Urfé's *L'Astrée*. He asserts that in the pastoral mirroring is an excursion, an intensified desire to "see" (102).¹¹ Discussing Ciceronian ambiguity, Derrida posits the importance of the notion of the friend as our own ideal image:

¹¹ Leonard Hinds explains the themes of mirroring and transvestism as involving "the perception of a physical appearance meant to designate an identity, a self", as "themes of figuring the self" that "have been commonplaces in Western literature since Apollodorus, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and Petronius's *Satyricon*" (100). He says that in *L'Astrée* depictions of these temporarily fix identity to transform it again "as if by metamorphosis"; they function like masks both hiding and revealing aspects of the self and personal intention. (100). According to Hinds, "d'Urfé imports the ancient mythological theme of metamorphosis from Ovid and resituates it in the Baroque world of the pastoral romance where visual appearance and identity fuse" (102). He invokes Jean Rousset on Baroque pastoral theatre to characterize this technique: "Les vêtements ou les voiles composent les corps, les masques se confondent avec les visages" (102)—more or less: the clothes or the veils make the body, the masks merge with the faces. Critics Hinds cites characterize themes of the period/of Baroque art "as evincing chaotic movement, open form, and irregular distribution of ornament into literary motifs of instability, mobility, metamorphosis, and emphasis on appearances such as facades, masks, and disguises," and Hinds suggests these artistic features have been translated into literary themes. He further articulates that in pastoral drama fictional characters are never sure whether the visual image of the self represents the truth—also a common case for visual representation in French literature of the time, "since the visible in its contemporary sense permitted what seemed false to become the truth, and vice versa.

[A]ccording to Cicero, his *exemplar* is projected and recognized in the true friend. . .

Since we watch him looking at us, thus watching ourselves, because we see him keeping our image in his eyes—in truth in ours—survival is then hoped for, illuminated in advance, if not assured, for this Narcissus who dreams of immortality. (4)¹²

The desire to see in friendship is an abstract ideal. Philips capitalizes on the conceptual nature of the look to apply its transformative properties to the trope of declaration. Declaration is another of friendship's axioms. Derrida also notes the classical rhetoric that holds that "the friendship I bear [porte] for someone. . . cannot remain a secret for myself. Even before it is declared (to the other, in a loud voice), the act of love would thereby be, at its very birth, *declared*" (9). Philips uses this concept in excellent accord with friends with absent bodies; friends who cannot be seen should have difficulty proving this process of doubling, hoping, and affirming. Instead she uses declaration—a compulsive, self-evidencing process in friendship—to compliment her friend's natural, intrinsic separation, and the spherical and philosophical movement it instigates. Declaration is looks dressed in words:

But as the morning Sun'to drooping flowers,
As weary Travellers a shade doe find.
As to the parched Violett Evening showers;
Such is to me from thee a look that's kind.

But when that look is dress'd in words, 'tis like

¹² From *The Politics of Friendship*. "And this is how he envisages us: with a friendly look. Cicero uses the word *exemplar*, which means portrait but also, as the *exemplum*, the duplicate. . . The two meanings (the single original and the multipliable copy cohabit here; they are—or seem to be—the same, and that is the whole story, the very condition of survival" (4).

The mystique power of musick's Unison;

Which when the finger does one Violl strike.

The other's string heaves to reflection. (65-72)

The process of declaring, of looking, is something the speaker describes as doing alone. The writer can leave the body—going off in a search to declare/express, but may not always find the other who may be “absent at the interview”:

Beleive not then, that being now secure

Of either's heart, we have no more to doe:

The Sphaeres themselves by motion do endure,

And they move.on by Circulation too.

And as a River, when it once has pay'd'

The tribute which it to the Ocean ow's.

Stops not, but turns, and having cufl'd and play'd

On its own waves, the shore it overflows:

So the Soul's motion does not end in bliss.

But on her self she scatters and dilates.

And on the Object doubles, till by this

She finds new Joys, which that reflux creates.

But then because it cannot all contein,

It seeks a vent by telling the glad news.

First to the heart which did its Joys obtain.

Then to the heart, which did those Joys produce.

When my Soul then does such excursions make,

(Unless thy soul delight to meet it too)

What satisfaction can-it give or take.

Thou being absent at the interview? (37-56)

No-body: Difficult Modulations of Pleasure

“The middle ground on which feminine agents participate in communal priorities is far harder to reach; useful objects and antisocial exempla appear as natural products of virtue, but an outcome that preserves the social value of sexual subjects requires something more like alchemy.

(Katlyn Schwarz 167, emphasis mine).

Philips’s speaker in “To my Lucasia, in defence of declared friendship” describes a movement characterized by self-instigating inertia. To write and to declare is the process by which her spherical-intelligences aim to make contact. Her souls (intelligences) move in a cyclical, orbital constancy. Constancy leads the speaker to “[find] new Joys, which that reflux creates”, enduring in circulation like “The Sphaeres” by themselves in rotation. Finding joy, pleasure, and reflexive desire through a *moving constancy* is a peculiar application of the feminine virtue of chastity. According to medieval and Renaissance misogynist discourse, women require the bands of chastity’s controls to manage an unruly, unreliable, wanton nature. (“Wanton” is generally “undisciplined” but also specifically: “Lustful; not chaste, sexually promiscuous” and “(esp. a woman)” [OED 3.a].) “Joy” and “satisfaction” are central to the process friendship and “To my Lucasia, in defense of declared friendship” describe. Souls “delight” in one another; the speaker

only will find satisfaction if the other is not “absent at the interview”. Desire of the experience and of the experience of the other (the friend). In this poem, and generally, Philips portrays desire as an obstacle that cannot only be answered by her symbolic removal of the body. Ideologically, the feminine body *and* the will (the intellect) are wanton. In theory, a feminine will or body poses a risk of ravishment.¹³ Philips discusses rivers and oceans as streams of reflux and pleasure as carefully controlled by a moving cycle. Spherical (planetary) rotation, streams spilling into the ocean, etc. depict a natural process of change and flow, even carefully including excess: A river runs into the ocean, “Stops not, but turns” and plays on its own waves and “overflows” the shore.

The speaker’s declaration bears a striking resemblance to the *Symposium*’s discussion of love’s hierarchy and the first base level of desire experienced by the boy before he has mastered the art of loving:

. . . then the spring that feeds the stream Zeus named ‘Desire’ when he was in love with Ganymede begins to flow mightily in the lover and is partly absorbed by him, and when he is filled it overflows and runs away outside him. Think how a breeze or echo bounces back from a smooth solid object to its source; that is how the stream of beauty goes back to the beautiful boy and sets him aflutter. It enters through his eyes, which are its natural route to the soul; there it waters the passages for the wings, starts the wings growing, and fills the soul of the loved one with love in return. (120)

¹³ Greenstadt explains two distinct kinds of rapture or *raptus* depicted by Thomas Aquinas. “The first is when an emotion or ‘passion’ ‘is so intense’ that ‘the will can[not] resist,’ so that ‘it makes away with all use of reason, as happens in those who are mad because of the intensity of their wrath or of their love’ and the second ‘is a state of spiritual rapture in which the individual is ‘carried away’ in an ecstatic union with God: since ‘the divine goodness infinitely surpasses human capacities’ . . . Both sinful and spiritual *raptus* involve the subversion of the will—in the first case by the lower or ‘sensitive appetite,’ in the second by divine grace” (n.45). Philips’s female body poses a risk of an ambiguous ravishment; at times one or the other, if not both.

Philips's speaker describes the soul's motion as a natural option for friends to practice friendship's elevated philosophy (which she argues they are suited to and inclined to). But instead of arguing for friends to withstand distance by being virtuously masculine (and also chaste) by being steadfast and constant, the speaker petitions for the friends to do something; in fact that must do something; they must declare or it will all stop.

The idea of willful constancy was an available strategy for asserting agency under an ideological rhetoric framed by masculine dominance and feminine subordination. In *A treatyce of Moral philosophy* William Baldwin writes:

Naturally in times past wyves were adurned with these vertues, that is to be shamefast in their visages, temperate in words, wyse of wytte, sober in goinge, meke in conversacion, pitifull in correccion well regarding their livying, not keeping companies, stedfast in promise, and constant in love. (Qtd. in Schwarz 107)

Excelling in these various forms of temperance, a woman could exert a kind of dominion over herself. In her discussions of the chaste will and its masculine and feminine literary applications, Amy Greenstadt explains that in "portraying chaste women as exceptional, Augustine's perspective resembled that of his fellow theologians, who saw female sexual purity as a spiritual state that transcended the sinful earthly realm" (18). Kathryn Schwartz also demonstrates that acts of feminine devotion (such as those described by Baldwin):

[I]n its resolute adherence to a proper object, constancy is a consequential feminine act that intersects masculine identity in vital and unsettling ways. . . Women who assert constancy are subjects of their own discourse, even as they are subjects in an ideological sense as well, constituted by a prescriptive force which ensures, in Louis Althusser's famous phrase, "they 'work all by themselves.'" (107)

Philips asserts constancy. Her characters engage in spiritual friendships that are non-corporal and so master the unpredictable rein of the flesh. Greenstadt points out that Augustine differs from other theologians “in detaching this state of transcendence from the condition of the body and instead locating it firmly in the space of the mind” (19). Strangely though, Philips gives an Augustinian transgressive mental space a mobile quality associated with the unpredictable rein of the flesh. Her friends must control the bondage of the flesh by conveying “transactions through the Eare” (“In defense...” 29-32). By the process of writing, friends exercise control through engaging in a rhythm of fluid, orbital engagement with the pleasurable pursuit of another. Her version of constancy is mutable but restrained by natural processes: by being in friendship (in this case marked by declaring it—a compulsive state in which the condition of friendship precedes the declaration). Philips’s version of constancy does not only overcome feminine wantonness. Desire and an excess of pleasure are retained as an inert force within friendship’s bands; wantonness or feminine mutability is not harnessed entirely. Instead, its control is the basis for friendship’s intimacy.

Philips’s assertion of agency is not *quite* the Althusserian “prescriptive force” of virginal chastity or heroic femininity associated with independence from males Laurie Shannon likens to “the gender concentrate’ of male friendship” (69). Instead, it is more closely related to constructions of marital chastity. Because a woman would have marital sexual duties, some formulations of chastity necessarily included sites of sexual compromise. Because friendship is a rhetorical tradition imbued with desire and physical proximity, it is not surprising that Philips’s appropriation resembles language of erotic negotiation. Additionally, Philips’s agency engages notions of marital chastity rather than virginal chastity because friendship is social; its inner, private significance has inescapable social meaning. However private and non-corporal (and

even pastoral) Philips's figurations are, her "Society of friendship" is a communal space. Beyond that, members of her society include men, and several of Philip's poems address married life (both favorably and critically); her speakers advocate for good and bad matches. Philips's friend's stage involves role play and fantasy but her friends are not Diana's virgins enjoying the resistant freedoms of a life without men. Schwarz discusses the difficulty in which women could factor themselves as virtuous social participants explaining that the "middle ground on which feminine agents participate in communal priorities is far harder to reach; useful objects and antisocial exempla appear as natural products of virtue, but an outcome that preserves the social value of sexual subjects requires something more like alchemy" (167). Philips uses alchemy or metaphysical language to privilege friends as *only* co-mingling spirits (without bodies). It is that alchemical union that allows for sexual expression through feminine wanton mobility. Her sheer avoidance of the friend's body speaks for the difficulty of describing feminine friends as sharing in bodies and pleasures. The marriage bed and the friend—commonly a "bedfellow" are not distinct in Schwarz's terms. "Sexual subjects" are desiring and desired subjects; the experience is difficult enough to distinguish that it appears in friendship texts again and again. If Philips's friendship does hint to a utopian separatist space, it does so by contrasting the marriage bed. Friendship is another space where erotic wills can move under ideological bands, but at once more and less freely because friendship is a virtual and unincorporated space.

Philips's friends are souls carefully positioned as two in pursuit of one another from a distance, enjoyed according to a process based on writings from afar. Through only textual contact, friends will have no choice of sinning or falling or behaving as sublunaries.¹⁴ This can be read as a hyper sexual resistance—an exaggerated version of what is already written into

¹⁴ As the speaker says in "Friendship in emblm": Friendship is a process of reclaiming one another when they "misse": "For whose're will grossely fall/Can never be a friend at all" (33-36).

friendship's rhetoric. Philips depicts a kind of *equitable jouissance* or *virtuous eroticism* that should be impossible for friends too separate to register as spiritually elevated. Greenstadt highlights Michel de Montaigne's discussion of the particular pleasure afforded to same-sex (male) friendships. Montaigne describes friendship's pleasure as based in an "*equitable jouissance*," untarnished "by the pursuit of physical union: 'enjoying doth loose-it, as having a corporall end, and subject to satiety. On the other side, friendshippe is enjoyed according as it is desired, it is neither bredde, nor nourished, nor encreaseth but in jouissance.'" Greenstadt likens this to a "virtuous eroticism" of an "impossible" love that exists "in the desire itself" (48).

Returning specifically to the process of declaration, we can further see that Philips handles friendship's rhetoric through a chaste lens. When friends seek one another in writing—what "...in defense of declared friendship" refers to as "when that look is dress'd in words" (69)—friends can climb love's hierarchical ladder (traditionally learning how to desire each other ethically or philosophically instead of carnally) without fear of ravishment. Philips's looks-in-words has a double purpose. On one hand, it supports the idea of the unreliable and deceptive feminine wanton (whose look is intrinsically suspicious and/or lust-inspiring). On the other hand, it works within the notion of permissible seductive spaces (potentially seductive looks are ok if they are unincorporated). Both ideas coincide with an unseen feminine eroticism supported by Augustine's account of human sexuality. Augustine held that men's bodies involuntarily respond to lust while women's do not, making it "possible for a woman to be both seductive and chaste" (Greestadt 20). But in taking such care to create un-embodied friendships, Philips distances her friends from any possible association with lust inspired by a desiring gaze.

The speaker of "To Sir Amorous La Foole" criticizes the suspicious gaze as male:

Women, men say, are Fooles they know,

But what are they that call us so,
 When their Sighes and Amorous ware,
 But more serious Follies are.
 What time wee spend to curle and dress our haire,
 You spend to thinke us, though we are not, fayre” (7-12).

This is a pithy turn-around pinning men’s attention to women’s dress as more foolish and time-consuming than female aesthetic preparation. Since fairness is also associated with weakness, the speaker’s argument: “we are not, fayre” attests to women’s strength and seriousness. (Also see “fair” “14.c.: “That may be legitimately aimed at or pursued; that is considered a reasonable target for criticism, attack, etc” [OED])). But this kind of gaze is certainly distinguishable from the friend’s look. The friend’s gaze is instead confined to an inner process as covert as female arousal.¹⁵

The Body of the Friend and the Womanish Writer

To appreciate Philip’s friendships that have so much soul, and so little body, we should understand how Renaissance friendship discourses are contingent on the friend’s physicality. Foremost, friendship is an act of association. One must have a friend to be a friend. Essentially, a friend must have, or at one time have had, a body. But Philips marks her entrance into the discourse in a manner that insists on the insignificance of the body. In “A Friend” Philip’s speaker holds that women are excluded from friendship on account of their sex—on account of

¹⁵ Greenstadt explains: “Augustine’s sense that female pleasure was invisible may explain why he was able to describe raped women as capable of involuntarily experiencing carnal delight while their wills remained completely resistant and chaste. In evading the punishment for the Fall in which carnal disobedience manifested as a visible sign, it seems the female sex also escaped the regime of postlapsarian sexuality in which willful intention could never fully be distinguished from carnal desire and pleasure” (18).

their bodies. Instead of arguing that a woman's form can also house two souls in one body, her speaker posits that the body is not engaged in friendship.

If no soules no sexes have, for men 't'exlude
 Women from friendship's vast capacity.
 Is a design injurious and rude,
 Onely maintain'd by partiall tyranny.
 Love is allow'd to us, and Innocence,
 And noblest friendships doe proceed from thence. (19-24)

Her reiteration of a metaphysical, rather than material body, indicates a preoccupation with the friend's body; it signals an understanding friendship's discursive reliance on the body.

Renaissance friendship is not a private religion. It is communal and its rhetoric is pervasive. Laurie Shannon explains, "[f]riendship works as a powerful and persuasive kind of political imagination, and its figures traverse an array of forums, from humanist and courtly contexts to popular literature" (17). In "The Enquiry" Philips plays on the expansiveness of friendship as a classical and contemporary tradition:

But if truth be in auncient song,
 Or story we believe,
 If the inspir'd and greater throng
 Have scorned to deceive;
 There have been hearts whose friendship gave
 Them thoughts at once 'both soft and brave. (13-18)

The speaker of “The Enquiry” expresses the broadness of its ideal while it laments the rarity of (real life) examples in a move made to add credit to her characters who “find [their] immortalitie/By inward sense” (7-8).¹⁶

In *The Friend*, Alan Bray emphasizes an intrinsic cohabitant character in male friendship. He positions the body of the friend as an important signifier that will eventually be re-encoded in terms of the suspicious sodomite as the public role of friendship is absorbed into the emerging ideal of companionate marriage. It is the body and acts on and by bodies that formulate an important legislative character that contributed to the production of the modern category of “the homosexual.”¹⁷ Bray holds that the “tangible presence of bodies” in close physical proximity are representations of a correspondingly “intimate and *physical* closeness, as tangible as the bread and wine consumed in the Lord’s Supper” (144). He discusses classical friendship’s emphasis on commixture as manifest in a sharing of physical procedures he calls “[t]he gift of the [friend’s] body” (156). The exchange is upheld as a pleasurable sharing in biological functions like sleeping, eating, and the more abstract—shared burial, holding the material body “was a sign of power and security in the friend. . . it gestured toward a place of comforting safety in an insecure world” (156). The public, formal character Bray discusses does not include women. Scholars such as Lorna Hutson and Valerie Traub have responded specifically to Philips’s absence in Bray’s history. Hutson and Traub each differently posit a textual eroticism in Philips’s poetry that qualifies as part of the kind of “libidinal economy” Bray describes.¹⁸ I follow that the erotics

¹⁶ The protestant doctrine of grace vs. works aligns here with friendship’s inner assurance for safety and memory.

¹⁷ See, e.g. Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality, Volume I* and David Halpern’s “Forgetting Foucault: Acts, Identities, and the History of Sexuality.”

¹⁸ Phrasing is Hutson’s in “The Body of The Friend and the Woman Writer: Katherine Philips’s Absence from Alan Bray’s *The Friend* (2003)” (p.1).

of Philip's friendship poetry is significant, but maintain that its covertness both enables its formation and preserves it from the politics of suspicion Bray, Hutson, and Traub imply.

Shannon's *Sovereign Amity* traces more discursive and less material (or literally companionate) aspects of the friend's public, formal character. She demonstrates that friendship as a utopian vision of human consent—its “moral discourse of candor” is manifest in “the face-to-face relations of embodied power”. In particular, she shows how it is factored into strategies for addressing a potentially tyrannical power” (17, 61).¹⁹ In part, Shannon focuses on friendship's role in a politics of consent.

Philips's friendship poetry specifically addresses friendship's manifestation in matters of state and subjugation. The speaker of “Friendship's Mysterys, to my dearest Lucasia” discusses her friends' free election (8), and explains, “We are our selves but by rebound/And all our titles shuffled so,/Both Princes, and both subjects too.” (23-25). Philips engages in friendship etiquette specifically engaged with “personage”. Shannon explains that the “office-holding ‘public person’ (archetypically but not necessarily a monarch) maintains a governmental function that distinguishes him from the status of a merely private subject” (10). The friends in Cicero's *De amicitia* (an authoritative Renaissance text on friendship) are state officials. Laelius explains:

[Scipio] and I stood side by side in our concern for affairs of state and for personal matters; we shared a citizen's home and a soldier's tent; we shared one element indispensable to friendship, a complete agreement in aims, ambitions and attitudes. (85)

Philips's appropriation sets a stage wherein her characters use friendship to role-play as proprietors. But because female bodies (though not their will, or intellect according to

¹⁹ This is not necessarily a byproduct of friendship's interior philosophies; it is unfair to bother with that kind of chronology when classical friendship has always been a public matter interested in socially legible worth, both during and after life.

Augustine) are *property*, the female friend's body must *disseminate*. It does not make sense for owned-bodies to perform as office holding friends. In consequence, their relative intellectual autonomies play the game.

Establishing distance: "Submit to me in disguise"/Coterie rules and social contract

The premise of role-play in Philip's coterie sets a balanced stage. "*To my Lady M. Cavendish, chosing the name of Policrite*" lays terms for her friend's entrance into "The Society of Friendship" wherein foremost: they will be concerned with a spiritual rather than physical form.

That Nature in your frame has taken care,
As well your Birth as Beauty do declare,
Since we at once discover in your Face,
The lustre of your Eyes and of your Race:
And that your shape arid fashion does attest,
So bright a form has yet a brighter guest. (1-6).

This is one of the only poems in which Philips's speaker addresses the physical form of another in personified (non-metaphysical) terms outside of an isolated metaphysical conceit. The speaker's interests concern what Policrite will "bring upon [Orinda's] head" from her "boundless mind" (10). Orinda continues to express that because Cavendish (note this is not the duchess of Newcastle) agrees to meet her as "Policrite"—in the non-material shape of a character²⁰. Orinda

²⁰ "Disguise" "2. a. Altered fashion of dress and personal appearance intended to conceal the wearer's identity; the state of being thus transformed in appearance for concealment's sake" (OED)

can love according to this “pitch” (23)—a decision²¹—that “lay[s] aside what dazzles vulgar sight” (13):

Since you submit to meet me in disguise.

Can lay aside what dazles vulgar sight,

And to *Orinda* can be *Policrite*.

You must endure my vows, and find the way

To entertain such Rites as I can pay:

. . .

I have no merits that your smile can win,

Nor offering to appease you when I sin;

. . .

When what I cannot serve, I strive to praise:

But I can love, and love at such a pitch. (12-16, 19-20, 22-23)

The poem is a metaphor for friendship’s social contract function. “Vows” and “rites” are terms for intellectual exchange demonstrated by spirits or unincorporated bodies. Their “pitch” or decision to “meet in disguise” lays out a coterie law that insists members are each proprietors of immaterial things: their souls/minds. Coterie participants are assigned a public office—giving them “personage” though pastoral sobriquets (characters or pen names). Sobriquets make metaphorical selves that are distinct from their “bright” corporal forms. To be “both princes, and

²¹ II. 5. a. An act of setting, laying, or paying down. OED “pitch”

both subjects” instead of friendship’s enemy: the flattering tyrant or beguiler²² Philips’s friends cannot inhabit (or address) bodies.

Further, Philip’s employs an ideology that is in line with a view that naturalizes female beauty with the realm of artifice²³ and flattery. A prerogative ‘lay[ing] aside what dazles vulgar sight’ signals a coterie contractual avoidance of language of desire that might evoke ravishing (corporal) images. The speaker has “no merits that [her] smile can win”. The inference is that something can be evoked, but nothing merited. This idea is emphasized by the following line: “Nor offering to appease you when I sin”, which also implies some guarantee that focusing on the subject’s physical beauty would induce something sinful.

The rules and rites expressed in this poem and are consistent throughout Philips’s friendship poems. Her characters are in and addressed as in non-physical forms, and they are chaste, expressing controlled passions. Friendship is presented as a model for a kind of economic discourse; however staged or metaphorical, friendship is equated with sharing office.²⁴

Constancy is presented as an exercise, as a coterie rule. Inconstancy is the premise of feminine disqualification from friendship’s discourse. Shannon holds that friendship’s autonomy

²² E.g. See Shannon’s articulations of Friendship’s “honest counsel” and acts of “truth telling” as distinguished from flattery and tyranny. (p.23)

²³ Discussing Sidney’s *Old Arcadia*, Greenstadt explains: “Since beauty undermines these characters’ intentions by propelling them into an act of ravishment that threatens the ordered system of marriage, beauty would seem to be a force fundamentally destructive to the social fabric. . . in Sidney’s society female beauty crystallized women’s value as objects of exchange between men in a system of marital relations adjudicated by the laws of ravishment. Figuring female beauty as the cause of men’s desire to possess women’s bodies clearly naturalizes that desire; by instead allying beauty with the realm of artifice, Sidney’s romance questions this apparent naturalness, opening up new possibilities for gendered identity and relations” (39).

²⁴ Sajed Chowdhury shows Philips as designing what she calls “a new female *logos*” in “Friendship in Emblem or the Seal, to my dearest Lucasia” which reads: “The hearts (like Moses bush presum’d)/Warm’d and enlighten’d, not consum’d./[...] So friendship governs actions best,/Prescribing Law to all the rest” (19-20, 43-44). Since women have no voice in Parliament, but are stated to be able to shift it (citing T.E.’s 1632 *The law’s resolution o women’s rights*: “[Women] make no laws, consent to none, they abrogate none. [...] I know no remedy, though some women can shift it well enough” (p.153). (Qtd. in Chowdhury 192). Further: friendship is the seale—friendship is the THING that governs actions. It is more than a behavioral model in *political relations* in the analogy. Chowdhury extends explanation by following with citation of form “To (the truly competent Judge of Honor) Lucasia, upon a scandalous libel made by J. Jones”: “Honour keeps court at home” (qtd 192).

is incompatible with “the implication of ‘womanishness’ or effeminacy on the part of the tyrant . . . Womanishness, then, is another name for (bad) obedience, a contingent subordination—to passions or to power.” Complicating the problem of female exclusion, chastity’s limitations of social contacts, silence, obedience, steadfastness and overall modest-ness, compliments male friendship’s emphasis on honest speech and unwavering commitment (56-57).²⁵²⁶ As we have seen earlier in “. . .in defense of declared friendship”, Philips’s constancy is formed in part through this paradox; it is marked by the control of wanton femininity. In consequence, there is no friend in Philip’s poetry—not in the cohabitating, burial-sharing, and equitable counselor sense—but there is a re-embodied friend articulated through a reserved, not-too-flattering speech legible in her coterie mutual consent to declare and to *write out* or disseminate the body of the friend. Philips’s writing is self-conscious of both the importance of the material, cohabitant, public friend and its problematic application to chastity’s rhetoric. Friendship’s terms are not applicable (at least not literally) to (e.g.) non-office holders, and the female character’s complicated relationship to desire and desirability present another challenge that Philips’s language overtly addresses. Her characters have layered, ideologically just cause, to “put off distinction and put on [their dust]” (“Winston Vault” 2).

²⁵ Shannon expounds on the compatibility of male friendship and female chastity; they are analogous in that they each promote “honest speech and restraint from passion, the self-possessed integrity, and the complex relation to authority” (56). Shannon explains that “virtuous female friendship shows a relation equality marked by self-sufficiency, refusals to flatter or beguile, and homonormative social relations, and it harbors in chastity’s social form” (57).

²⁶ Shannon also explains that: Shannon explain that “In stark contrast to the tendentious, Stoic supposition of ‘plenare power’ we have seen *De amicitia* to offer, the weakness argument suggests a person vulnerable to whatever ‘fortune, happe or chaunge’ befalls her. A weak constitution leaves woman vulnerable to random external forces; this permeability in turn grounds a further charge of mutability or fickleness—women are accorded a *contingent condition*, and political subordination only regularizes that contingency” (59, emphasis mine).

Surviving Pleasure

Philips's agency is couched within a predication on distance. Her immaterial, extra-embodied friend is in a disparate process of remembrance—a process we have seen detailed in terms of declaration. Her careful construction of unity is described by metaphysical symbols of joined intellect. It is a difficult process I liken to Schwarz's notion of alchemy (the difficult process of preserving the value of sexual subjects), legible in Philips's metaphysics of spiritual alchemical processes. In "Friendship's Mysterys" the conceit is chemically direct (in contrast to the earlier discussion of spheres turning and rivers redoubling):

Our hearts are doubled by their loss,

--Here mixture is addition grown;

We both diffuse, and both engrosse

And we, whose minds are so much one,

Never, yet ever, are alone. (11-15)

The speaker is positioned from the usual state of separation. The loss of the other's heart-self—and here is an example of the earlier mentioned reference to Philips's typical reference to bodies or body parts only in metaphysical terms, and most often by a "heart" as an individual piece of anatomy, as here. The implication is that the loss of the other's physical (literal) heart leads to their figurative hearts' doubling by the process of remembrances. The speaker depicts a sense of singularity through unity, *through* separation. By being in a state of having parted the friends "diffuse and engrosse". "Engross" is a process of absorption, wherein a thing draws entirely to itself. The emphasis on singularity is continued with the qualifier: they are "so much one" that they "Never, yet ever, are alone". The singular has its strongest hue of autonomy as the verse culminates on "alone" instead of "together".

The friends' constant separation reads as a natural state, rather than a proof that her friends have what it takes—the masculine, steady constitution—to weather the storm of temporary separation. Instead, separation is a valuable byproduct of the forgone material body—left behind the (dis)guise of the spirit. Constancy is again depicted in a state of restrained, feminine flux. Alchemical movements like diffusing and engrossing are natural processes. Elements move, like spilled water; it may leave the glass but on the floor, water is still water.

Philips's moving soul is not so strange when further considering friendship's rhetoric of remembrance. An enduring patience during separation, as Donne's "Valediction" expresses, is a sign of friends' prefigured separation through death. Traditionally, if the soul has left the body with a degree of permanence Philips insists on, the implication is that a friend has found some eternal rest. Classically this is described through *kleos*—rest in memory (usually afforded to heroic warriors). For Philips's contemporaries eternal rest is factored in Christian terms—in heaven, or in the practice of friendship as a form of Eucharistic preparation for the pending (next) resurrection (eternal life). In either case, friends are remembered through friends or decedents and marked formally, e.g. *kleos* via the epic genre and other forms of record-keeping, and Renaissance friendship has marks of memorial with elevated status in shared graves and tombs. Memories of friends function as living obituaries. "Survived by" has literal and figurative meanings; friends' memories continue through the friends with whom they shared their bodies and lives.

In stark contrast, Philips's friends are reciprocal living obituaries—remembering each other figuratively while they are still living. Eternal rest is rather eternal restlessness. Philips's construction of spiritual disguise is applied to poems elevating friendship through death and

memorial. By focusing on out-of-body characterizations, Philips's friends have already bit the dust.

The image of the shared grave as a public expression of remembrance is an important, visceral, medieval and Renaissance emblem. While writers like Philips and Donne play heavily with spiritual configurations of friendship, they do so in a historical context that wrestled intensely with the spiritual vs. bodily tension consistent in friendship's discursive history. Shannon explains that the English translations of Cicero's *De amicitia* are infused with John Tiptoft's "medieval monastic engagement with friendship doctrines, one that had struggled with the apparent worldliness of an attachment to a particular friend" (24-25). Bray's *The Friend* discusses this intersection in depth as he explains the pinnacle physical gesture (or "friend's gift") in medieval and Renaissance friendship as the shared grave. Bray details this ritual as "the most radical, the most unmistakable instance on the unique and irreplaceable nature of friendship . . . [the shared grave] has punctuated the course of this book: that even in death, especially in death, still 'Ecce ego et tu' [You and I, then *here*]" (259). The most elevated and immaterial construct in friendship—life after death—is grounded by stone and earth.

Philips's "Winston Vault" appears to answer to this shrine of embodied friendship directly, and takes Christ out friendship's Holy Communion rhetoric along with it. The speaker argues that Orinda and Lucasia—already "alike" must put off distinctions; both bodies and monuments belong to "vaine" artifice (9). Instead Orinda and Lucasia should be costumed in dust. (2) The rhetorical questioning of the friends' entombment is aligned with a questioning of Christ's. The implied certainty is that his burial was unnecessary and like Christ, these two friends should just as surely rise.

And why this Vault and Tomb? alike we must

Put off distinctions, and put on our dust.

Nor can the stateliest Fabrique help-to save

From the corruptions of a common Grave;

Nor for the resurrection more prepare
 Then if the dust-were scatter'd in the ayre.
 What then? th'ambition's Just, say some, that we
 May thus perpetuate our memory.
 Ah! false vaine task of art! ah! poore weak man,
 Whose monument does more then's merit can
 Who's by his friends best care and love abus'd.
 And in his very epitaph's accus'd!
 For did they not suspect his name would fall.
 There would not need an epitaph at all.
 But after death too, I would be alive.
 And shall, if my Lucasia doe, survive.
 I quit this pomp of death, and am content.
 Having her heart to be my monument:
 Though ne're stone to me, 'twill stone for me prove,
 By the peculiar miracle of Love.
 There I'll inscription, have, which no Tomb gives,
 Not, here Orinda Lyes, but, here she lives. (1-22)

“Winston Vault” destabilizes what Bray terms “wedded brotherhood”—an aspect of Renaissance friendship rhetoric congruent with Tiptoft’s monastic heritage. The speaker equates ceremonious preparations for the (pending) resurrection with unnecessary entombment. Orinda and Lucasia should prepare differently—beating death independently of pomp or convention. Friendship is a metaphorical religion that works their “peculiar miracle” (20); it is the “Seale” (two flaming hearts entwined with a

pair of compasses) and coterie performance—writing—that animates their memorial and deathlessness.

In “Winston Vault” Philips draws attention to memorial in friendship as a conflation of public and private signs. In concluding his discussion of the “Ciceronian exemplar,” Derrida posits that “[a]n arche-friendship would inscribe itself on the surface of the testament’s seal. It would call for the last word of the last will and testament. But in advance it would carry it away as well” (24). Carrying the seal in advance is exactly what Philip’s “To My-excellent Lucasia, on our friendship. 17th. July 1651” represents. Beyond endurance in separation in life or death, it says:

I did not live untill this time
Crown'd my felicity.
When I could say without a crime,
I am not Thine, but Thee. (1-4)

Not only is friendship already animated for her characters post-mortem, but it is charged with giving them life in the first place:

This Carkasse breath'd, and walk'd, and slept.
So that the world believ'd
There was a soule the motions kept;
But they were all deceiv'd.
For as a watch by art is wound
To motion, such was mine:
But never had Orinda found
A Soule till she found thine;

Which now inspires, cures and supply's.

And guides my darken'd brest:

For thou art all that I can prize,

My Joy, my Life, my rest.

Naturally, Philips's only mention of a complete body would be a carcass. In this poem, friends' souls are so much one as to have incepted one another. Automatically, post-inception, Lucasia and friendship give Orinda an eternal quality that is factored in the present.

Conclusions

"How much of a chance would a feminine friend have on this stage? And a feminine friend of hers, among themselves?"

(Derrida 57)

The potential eroticism of textual embodiment is not a new idea to apply to Philips's friendship poetry. But if such readings are to figure Philips into a history of homoerotic suspicion, how might we first consider her ideological constructions of innocence? Friendship's paradoxes—its contradictions and strange, accidental exceptions and abstractions lend themselves to hopeful, even death-defying imaginations. It is striking then, that Philips's enters the discourse so cautiously, carefully setting a fictional stage and tying the most fluid expressions of desire to cyclical and repetitive processes of estrangement. Perhaps it is Philips-like in balance: not too positivist and too tragic, to consider her subaltern and excluded status as offering a modest perk. In a Renaissance scene where friendship is a common religion, her writing understands an important classical component that insists that a good friend is hard to find. Montaigne's "Of Friendship" cautions readers not to mistake common for noble friendships:

Let not these other, common friendships be placed in this rank. . . You must walk in those other friendships bridle in hand, with prudence and precaution; the knot is not so well tied that there is no cause to mistrust it. "Love him," Chilo used to say, 'as if you are to hate him some day; hate him as if you are to love him.'" This precept, which is so abominable in this sovereign and masterful friendships, in regard to which we must use the remark that Aristotle often repeated: "O my friends, there is no friend" (194).

Philips's "The Enquiry" asks, "Why are the bonds of friendship tyed/With so remisse a knot/That by the most it is defyed" (31-33). Her overall construction of friendship's bands does not only leave room for some virtuous eroticism and feminine wantonness but also impresses readers a notion of intimacy as cautionary role-play—not asking: is there a female friend, but is there a friend at all? Perhaps what makes Philips most relevant to constructions of queer histories can be located within her innocence. Aren't an excess of innocence and the strain of any positive feminine erotic formulation somewhat inherently suspicious? Moreover, what is more susceptible to multiple relational possibilities than a construction of intimacy that is suspended in formlessness.

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