Navigating the Space between the ‘Chaste’ Female Friend and the ‘Monstrous’ Tribade: The Poetry of Katherine Philips and Aphra Behn

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Introduction

The formation of identities outside of the public sphere and the consequent formation of sexual identities and orientations, with the ensuing binary division between hetero- and homosexuality, that stands at the beginning of the contemporary conception of sexual identities is often considered to have begun in the eighteenth or nineteenth century when "perceptible same-sex sexual preferences and consequent self-recognition only [became] possible … through medical and psychological development" (Borris 4). However, although the emergence of a sexual identity in the contemporary sense had not yet taken place, the idea that there was no relation between sexual acts and one's behaviour or sense of self prior to the eighteenth or nineteenth century provides a relatively discontinuous view of sexual history that entails an imagined clean break in the cultural thinking between different time periods. To provide a more continuous narrative of the development of sexual identities in England, this thesis aims to explore the development of the expression of female same-sex relations and desire, or queer union, in the second half of the seventeenth century through the examination of the poetry of Katherine Philips (1632 – 1664) and Aphra Behn (1640 – 1689).

In examining this, the aim of this thesis is not to suggest that the development of sexual identities was a linear process where the modern-day lesbian[1] can be traced as a stable figure with the same cultural significations across different historical, cultural, and geographical areas. The concept of 'the modern-day lesbian' itself is suspect when we consider that this is an internally divergent identity rather than a stable, exhaustive signifier of an individual or group identity. This thesis instead suggests that female same-sex relations and desire could already be expressed by seventeenth-century women in a variety of ways and will look at the categories of representation that these women inhabited or chose not to inhabit. As David M. Halperin argues, "we need to find ways of asking how different historical cultures fashioned different sorts of links between sexual acts, on the one hand, and sexual tastes, styles, dispositions, characters, gender presentations, and forms of subjectivity, on the other" (44). This thesis will therefore consider how female same-sex relations and desire exist within a system of significations

[1] To prevent the conflation of the contemporary concept of lesbianism with female same-sex relations and desire expressed and possibly practiced in seventeenth-century England, the terms 'lesbian' and 'lesbianism' will not be used.

and interaction with the wider historical, cultural, and geographical area in which they are expressed and come into being.

Seventeenth-century England, as has been shown by scholars such as Valerie Traub, Harriette Andreadis, Kenneth Borris, and Jonathan Goldberg, is a period in which increasing public awareness and discourse developed regarding the possibilities of a female sexual subjectivity and female same-sex relations and desire. This increased awareness partially came about through and can be traced in the increase of translated and native classical, medical, legal, religious, travel, and pornographic texts which include discussions of such topics. As a result, the first chapter of this thesis will consider various seventeenth-century discourses on female (same-sex) sexuality to situate the literary expressions of female same-sex relations and desire by Philips and Behn in their historical and cultural context.

One of the possible modes for the expression of female same-sex relations and desire that developed during the seventeenth century is the figure of the female friend. Female friendship, later defined as romantic friendship in the eighteenth century when it became more explicitly eroticised, developed through the combination of a variety of cultural and social factors. Based on the already firmly established concept of intense male friendship, which featured extensive male networks which provided both social, political, and financial security, the concept of female friendship was a later development. An underlying cause for the later development of the concept of female friendship may be the lesser social benefits that can be gained from a network of extensive and intense female bonds when compared to a network of extensive and intense male bonds. However, another underlying cause that complicated the arrival of a tradition of female friendship may be that women were earlier deemed incapable of establishing and maintaining such bonds. Nevertheless, seventeenth-century women can be seen to be capable of forming such intense bonds of friendship and, like men, establish a network of connections among family members, neighbours, and friends whom they regularly visited and corresponded with.

In its initial stages, most public discourses on female friendship saw it as an appropriate way to prepare adolescent women for marriage. However, as female friendship came to be regarded by some women as an alternative to marriage, rather than a temporary adolescent attachment, it increasingly

became regarded as problematic. One element that may have contributed to male anxiety arising from intense female friendship is the discourse on female (same-sex) sexual pleasure. The ensuing anxiety about the irrelevance of a male prerogative in the sexual satisfaction and pleasure of women, where sexual encounters between women were no longer in service of preparing women for heterosexual marital sex, resulted in the division between 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' female friendship. Traub has charted the development of the 'monstrous' tribade, a woman whose clitoris has grown to the size of a man's penis and could be used to penetrate both men and women, alongside that of the female friend in the seventeenth century and has shown how elements of these two figures eventually came to be combined during the development of the perception of female same-sex relations and desire.

Taking on Traub's argument, this thesis will explore the elements through which the figures of the 'monstrous' tribade and the 'chaste' female friend are constructed and expressed. Philips and Behn are examined together since, while Philips uses the figure of the female friend, Behn uses the hermaphroditic or tribadic body. As a result, the eventual confluence of these two figures detailed by Traub can be seen in Philips's and Behn's similar adaptation and reclamation strategies for the expression of female same-sex relations and desire and a female sexual subjectivity while drawing on opposing discourses.

Philips's poetic mode for the expression of 'chaste' female friendship falls into the development of "a shadowed language of erotic ellipsis" (Andreadis 23, 2001) employed by women of the 'middling sort' or upper classes. Such discourses acknowledge while cleverly obscuring the possibilities for erotic behaviour that may or may not have been sexual by adopting elements from a variety of genres and conventions. Through this 'language', women were able to create a space in which to express same-sex relations and desire outside of the more explicitly sexualised or condemning discourses of male-authored and male-read writing. Philips can be seen as one of the early instances of the development of such a poetic mode. Therefore, chapter two of this thesis examines how Philips developed this poetic mode through the adaptation of elements from a variety of genres and discourses, mainly from the earlier traditions of male friendship, (Donnean) male-female love poetry, and the pastoral. Moreover, it will be examined how Philips reclaims some of the earlier literary conventions used in the portrayal of

female same-sex relations and desire, namely the homoerotic lament, displacement, and the trope of 'innocence' or impossibility.

By adapting elements from these earlier literary traditions, Philips found a socially acceptable way to express the female same-sex emotional, and perhaps erotic, attachments that she felt towards her close female friends in her poetry. Philips's employment of the 'chaste' female friend and her insistence on the 'innocence' of the emotions and wishes that she expresses in both her poetry and letters allowed her to articulate these sentiments while her work was at first regarded as an example of 'appropriate' female friendship and the highest form of female poetic excellence since Sappho by her contemporaries and slightly later writers, such as John Duncombe, who refers to her as "The chaste Orinda" who "rose; with purer light" (l.110) in his verse essay on women writers "The Feminiad" (1754).

To detail the poetic mode for the expression of female same-sex relations and desire which employs the 'monstrous' tribade, or otherwise sexually transgressive women, rather than the 'chaste' female friend, the third chapter of this thesis considers the poetry of Behn, who wrote slightly later than Philips. Contrary to Philips, although her literary prowess was recognised, Behn was not hailed as a model of chaste female poetic excellence. Instead, she was seen as a transgressive woman. The extent of the association between her and transgressive female behaviour is especially evident in the works of Behn's contemporaries or later writers who simultaneously admire her literary excellence and wish to emulate her while also attempting to distance themselves from her reputation. This tendency can be seen in the poem "The Circuit of Appollo" (1713) by Anne Kingsmill Finch in which Apollo first admires the poetic excellence of Behn, stating that "amongst Femes was not on the earth / Her superior in fancy, in language, or writt" (ll.13-14) but then immediately qualifies this statement when he "Yett own'd that a little too loosly she writt" (l.15).

Such hesitance to praise Behn's literary achievements without objecting to their 'loose' nature may well be because, opposite to Philips, Behn more explicitly eroticised her discourses and employed the more controversial figures of the tribade and the hermaphrodite. Rather than navigating the space between 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' female friendship to covertly erotise such discourses, Behn

can be seen to identify and more explicitly express the possibilities for a female sexual subjectivity and non-hierarchal sex based on mutuality and likeness. In her poetry, Behn condemns the arbitrary social restrictions placed on early modern women and undermines their necessity by subverting the gender constructs that function to hold them in place, proposing a genderless sexual liberation for either sex.

By examining Behn's work alongside that of Philips, it becomes evident that both writers reclaimed the pastoral space by adapting elements from similar literary traditions and conventions to establish new poetic modes for the expression of female same-sex relations and desire, or queer union. Because, in doing this, these women writers drew on opposing early modern representations of female same-sex behaviour, together they illustrate how female same-sex relations and desire were expressed within, or outside of, the socially accepted discourse of seventeenth-century England in similar ways.

Chapter 1: The Configuration of Female Same-Sex Relations and Desire and a Female Sexual Subjectivity in Early Modern England

To trace the development of the literary expression of female same-sex relations and desire in seventeenth-century England, it is useful to consider the cultural categories within which, or outside of which, women could define their relations with one another and develop a sexual subjectivity. Therefore, this chapter examines various non-literary and literary discourses regarding the topics of female friendship, the configuration of female same-sex sexual practices, and the formulation of a female sexual subjectivity to reconstruct the cultural context that influenced Katherine Philips and Aphra Behn. In contrasting these discourses, this chapter aims to establish a framework of the different cultural forces that influenced the development of the expression and perception of the 'chaste' female friend and the 'monstrous' tribade and their eventual confluence.

Although throughout seventeenth-century England the dominant view of women remained that they were created subordinate to men, the discussions about a woman's nature, place, and duty during this period were not homogenous. This chapter therefore examines a wide variety of discourses by both men and women which will be used to retrieve "seventeenth-century ways of conceptualizing, describing, characterizing and presenting women and their experiences" (Keeble 7). This is not to suggest that these discourses directly reflect the lived experiences of seventeenth-century women, but that they can provide "more direct access to women's self-representation in the past and … a ground from which to scrutinize male-authored texts and ideological constructions of femininity" (Frye and Robertson 7). These discourses made self-expression and representation possible for seventeenth-century women, either through an identification with or a rejection of those discourses, as they became increasingly available for middle- and upper-class women due to the printing press.

1.1. "On Affectionate Friendship": The Development of the Female Friend

Prior to the seventeenth century, women were often deemed incapable of establishing the same intense same-sex bonds of friendship as men, a sentiment which is expressed and summarised by Michel de Montaigne in his *Essays* (1580) where he argues that "women are in truth not normally capable of responding to such familiarity and mutual confidence as sustains that holy bond of friendship, nor do

their souls seem firm enough to withstand the clasp of a knot so lasting and so tightly drawn" (290). Women were thought to be too fickle to maintain a relationship like that of male friendship, which was characterised by and praised for its permanence as a union of both body and soul that lasted until after death. However, various scholars[2] have shown that intense bonds of friendship stopped being an exclusively male prerogative when, during the second half of the seventeenth century, more non-literary and literary texts started to circulate which recognised women's ability to form intense bonds of friendship. As Susan Frye and Kate Robertson illustrate in their collection of essays on various forms of female alliance in early modern England, *Maids and Mistresses, Cousins and Queens: Female Alliances in Early Modern England* (1999), although textual evidence may be more difficult to find for female alliances or connections in early modern England than for male alliances, these relationships were nevertheless equally important for the female conception of community.

Although Traub argues that "there was little public discourse about the virtues and possibilities of friendship between women, and what discourse did exist had none of the elevated social standing" (299, 2002) of discourse on male friendship, texts on female friendship authored by women themselves began to circulate more commonly. In these texts, women can be seen to adapt elements from the traditions of male friendship, attempting to create an equal though alternative model for the expression of female friendship. These elements "have a long and recognizably stable continuity that was part of a shared cultural heritage, repeatedly shaped and reshaped to various ends" (Andreadis 64-65, 2001), and were now being 'reshaped' by women writers. Even before the start of the seventeenth century, an elaboration on female friendship can be found in the Scottish "Poem XLIX" in *The Maitland Quarto Manuscript* (1586). In this poem, the speaker employs several motifs that were commonly used during the early modern period to describe male friendship, emphasising the eternal nature of the friendship and establishing parallels between the female friendship of the speaker and the subject and the friendship shared between couples from the classical period such as Achilles and Patroclus. Female friendship is elevated and placed "far above / the auncient heroicis' love" (431). The eroticisation of female friendship can also already be glimpsed in this poem when the speaker expresses a wish to be

[2] Such as Valerie Traub, N.H. Keeble, Susan Frye and Kate Robertson, and Harriette Andreadis.

metamorphosed into a man so that she can marry her friend, lamenting that they must instead remain **"**unhappy women" (432). This poem illustrates that a model for the expression of female friendship became available which based itself on earlier traditions of male friendship and classical figures of friendship to authorise its existence, and directly counters Montaigne's argument by saying that "by our friendship shall be seen / There is more constancy in our sex / Than ever among men has been" (432).

By modelling itself on the elevated traditions of male friendship and by emphasising its 'innocent' and 'chaste' nature, the expression of female friendship is dissimilar to the discourses on female same-sex sexual transgression. Nevertheless, the concept of female friendship was not received entirely without distrust. In Protestant England, the status assigned to virginity and monasticism by the Roman Catholic Church, which were both seen as esteemed alternatives to marriage and motherhood, had no clear substitute. As a result, "an unmarried woman was an anomaly with no defined role or position" (Keeble 177). A contemporary observation of this effect was made by Richard Allestree in *The Ladies Calling* (1673), where unmarried women were classified as 'old maids' – regardless of their age – and were "now thought such a curse, as no poetic fury can exceed, looked on as the most calamitous creature in Nature" (145). Such a condemnation of unmarried women may be unsurprising when we consider that the perception of a woman's virtues and goodness was directly linked with her role as a good wife and mother. As Keeble states, "marriage was … conceived as women's proper and 'natural' destiny; their character, education and behaviour were discussed almost exclusively in relation to it" (87). As a result, an existence outside of marriage, or other patriarchal institutions, may have made these women difficult to 'read' for seventeenth-century members of society.

Because marriage was considered the 'proper and natural destiny' of a woman, female friendship was supposed to be "a disposable relationship once marriage has taken place" (Andreadis 70, 2001). This assumption can be seen in *The Ladies Dictionary* (1694), created by Nicolaas jr. Heinsius, under the heading "Friendship contracted by single Persons". Here, it is said that, once married, only a "*lower measure*" (196) of "Friendship *may innocently remain where it was before planted*" (197). More strongly, it is also said that "the *former Friendship* must be diminish'd" (196) because otherwise the distribution of affection would be unfair towards the spouse. However, female

friends did not always wish their friendship to diminish after marriage. For some women, such as Philips, female friendship even became a preferable alternative to marriage and the expected compromise between friendship and marriage was rejected. Such an attitude can be seen in the themes of "celibacy and the attractions of female company and friendship" in literature "from the 1650s onward, allowing the contemplation, if not the enjoyment, of an alternative emotional and social order" (Keeble 177). Among middle- and, especially, upper-class women, this alternative emotional and social order would develop into the tradition of romantic female friendship in the eighteenth century. The preference of female friendship over marriage and the subsequent use of communities of female support to avoid or discredit marriage may have led female friendship to become regarded as potentially subversive and experienced as threatening towards the patriarchal patterning of society by some.

This recognition of the subversive possibilities inherent in female friendship and the (male) anxiety this caused may be the beginning of "the interweaving discourses of chaste female friendship with those of tribadism" (Traub 323, 2002). The anxiety arising from distinguishing between 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' female friendship can be seen increasingly in early modern discourses on friendship, such as in Thomas Blount's *The Academy of Eloquence* (1663), where under the entry on "friendship" passion is described as "Friendship run mad". To prevent this, it is stated that "Friendship [has to] be properly stiled Sober Passion" (69). According to Traub, the growing eroticisation of and anxiety over female friendship was "one measure of the growing threat of the unnatural *within* the seemingly natural" (323, 2002). This anxiety may have been increased by other factors, some of which were the non-literary and literary discourses on the possibilities of female same-sex sexual practices, female sexual pleasure and gratification – which did not require a man – and the recognition of women as sexual subjects.

1.2. A Rhetoric of Displacement: The Configuration of Female Same-Sex Erotic Spaces

When examining the discourses on female same-sex desire and sexual practices, a tradition of displacement can be traced. According to this tradition, the spaces within which female same-sex desire was constructed as possible were often liminal spaces: either exotic countries whose habits were thought to be barbarous and far removed from those in England or secluded all-female spaces outside the

patriarchal system such as convents and pastoral communities. This tradition may have alleviated some of the rising anxiety over the possibilities of female same-sex desire and sexual practices taking place in England. The first tactic of displacement can mainly be found in travel narratives. Sexual transgression among women was said to take place in exotic countries, quite often in Arabia, and this way was associated with the supposedly 'loose' and 'barbaric' nature of the cultures of these countries, and, especially, of the women in these countries. According to Katherine Park, this "projection of sexual irregularity onto the exoticized bodies of women of another race and continent was a familiar trope in early modern European topographical literature" (172-3) and functioned both to fascinate the readers and to alleviate anxiety over such practices taking place closer to home by foreignizing them.

Public baths and harems, common in Arabic countries, appear to be particularly associated with female same-sex sexual practices in travel narratives. Confronted with young women who are "exposed Nacked to the view of other Women" in the bathhouses, older, experienced women were thought to "fall in Love with them, as young Men do with us, at the sight of Virgins" (De Busbecq 181) and were said to use their experience to seduce these young women. The account of Nicholas de Nicolay of his travels in Turkey, recorded in his *Navigations into Turkie* (1585), reports similar practices, where in the bathhouses women "sometimes become so fervently in love the one of the other as if it were with men" upon "perceiving some maiden or woman of excellent beauty" after which "they will not cease until they have found means to bathe with them, and to handle and grope them everywhere at their pleasures" (90). Such behaviour was perceived as "feminine wantonness" (De Nicolay 90) and, as such, was condemned by those who wrote the travel narratives while, paradoxically, it was also used to titillate the readers.

The fascination with the enlarged clitoris that could grow to the size of a man's penis and its association with the 'monstrous' tribade and female sexual transgression or excess, which is discussed below, was also displaced to exotic countries together with its use in female same-sex sexual practices or the penetration of a man by a woman. In her manual on midwifery and childbirth, *The Midwives Book* (1671), Jane Sharp describes the enlarged clitoris and states that "some lewd women have endeavoured to use it as men do theirs. In the *Indies*, and *Egypt* they are frequent, but I never heard but

of one in this Country" (45). Here, in her attempt to protect women in England from accusations of tribadism and sexual excess, Sharp simultaneously condemns foreign women, drawing on the images provided in travel narratives of the sexually transgressive exotic woman to move the anxiety over such behaviour outside of England.

Such attempts at the geographical displacement of female same-sex desire and sexual practices, however, did not prevent non-literary and literary discourses on such practices from arriving in England. Nevertheless, like the geographical displacement to exotic, foreign countries, female same-sex desire and sexual practices were often imagined in enclosed all-female spaces outside of patriarchal society. In such spaces, women could enjoy more independence and uninterrupted intimacy with each other. One such space that was constructed as a potential site for female same-sex erotic contact was the all-female community or convent. The displacement of female same-sex relations, desire, and sexual practices to religious convents referred them to an increasingly liminal space due to the association between convents and a dubious religious status. As Catholicism was beginning to be regarded with a sense of distrust or even open animosity, "anti-Catholicism and hostility to the political, economic and emotional autonomy experienced by nuns meant that convents were often represented as a site of transgressive sexuality" (Jennings 11).

This perception of convents as spaces of sexual transgression, both for male and female same-sex erotic contact, can be seen in John Bale's *Actes of the English Votaryes* (1546), which contains a litany of vices supposedly committed by the Catholic religious classes. Here, the sworn celibacy and segregation was thought to cause those in the religious convents to develop "prodygouse lustes of uncleanesse" which they "have brent in their owne lustes one to an other … nonne with nonne" (q.t. in Traub 63, 2002). This and other anti-Catholic polemic of the period established the perception of the convent as a space that enabled female same-sex relations, desire, and sexual practices.

Several early modern literary texts can be seen to draw on this perception to bring to the fore the unstable boundaries between friends and lovers. One such text is the closet play *The Convent of Pleasure* (1688) by Margaret Cavendish. In this play, Lady Happy creates a secular all-female convent so that she and several other unmarried upper-class women can live outside of the restrictions of

patriarchal society, avoiding entrapment in patriarchal institutions such as marriage, which Lady Happy argues are "to those that are virtuous … a greater restraint then a Monastery" (1.2.98). Lady Happy here knowingly uses the convent as a secluded, liminal space outside of patriarchal society to create a more harmonious all-female community. Cavendish also shows the possibilities which an all-female space provides for the development of same-sex emotional or erotic attachments. When Lady Happy falls in love with the Prince who is cross-dressed as a Princess, she wonders "why may not I love a Woman with the same affection I could a Man?" (4.1.118). This way, Cavendish questions the seventeenth-century boundaries between 'appropriate' same-sex affections and transgressive behaviour and "anticipates the ideal female communities that were to become popular in the eighteenth century" (Andreadis 84, 2001).

As Traub has argued, many literary texts dealing with female same-sex relations and desire displace it to such spaces outside of patriarchal society, among which the pastoral space, where they use "the combined effect of pastoral and elegy … to render 'feminine' homoeroticism insignificant by situating it safely in a spatially and temporally distant golden age" (175, 2002). However, around the mid-seventeenth century, women writers, including Philips and Behn, began to appropriate the pastoral and its associations with female same-sex intimacies. As Andreadis argues, women writers used this genre "to facilitate expressions of passion and to accommodate understandings of themselves that would not engage definitions of transgressive desire" (151, 2001). The traditionally male voice of the eroticised discourse of heterosexual pastoralism was adapted to accommodate a female voice. While in the pastoral tradition of the Cavalier poets the speakers were "constantly drawing magic circles that will shut the world out, seeking to find an autonomous realm of love and art, a court immune to change" (Chernaik 61), the female pastoral tradition instead aims to distance itself from the violent and oppressive patriarchal world by retreating into an all-female natural retreat or, in Behn's poetry, a retreat in which the gender hierarchy is abandoned.

By adapting this tradition of the pastoral, women writers, rather than accept the pastoral displacement as a move into insignificance, instead draw on the tradition that associated Diana and "the nymphs with female erotic intimacies" (Andreadis 158, 2001) to create a space outside of patriarchal

society where such intimacies can take place. Moreover, in this adaptation of the pastoral and its nature symbolism, Nature is now no longer something that opposes female same-sex relations and desire. Instead of being 'unnatural', a notion which can be found in the traditional female homoerotic lament, female same-sex relations and desire are authorised, enabled, and paralleled by Nature. However, by placing female same-sex relations and desire and the possibility of erotic intimacies among women in a pastoral, natural setting or a convent outside of everyday, societal reality, such relations and desire are still rendered relatively harmless since they are displaced to a distant, secluded environment.

1.3. Towards a Female Sexual Subjectivity: Same-Sex Practices within the Household

Alongside this tradition of displacement, the space within which female same-sex sexual practices came to be configured as taking place within patriarchal society was the shared bed within the household. The practice of bedsharing among women was already common in the seventeenth century due to architectural constraints on privacy. Women from different classes, ages, and marital statuses were able to share a bed. This did not only function to conserve heat but also "fostered companionship, and enabled erotic contact" (Traub 53, 2002). The possibilities for bodily intimacy, especially between experienced married women and younger unmarried women, that bedsharing provided caused the shared bed to "[function] as an important site of female homoerotic attraction" (Traub 59, 2002) that was separate from male spaces.

Knowledge of the possibilities for female same-sex sexual practices that the shared bed provides started to be explicitly expressed in various discourses in early seventeenth-century England. One such text is Richard Brome's play *The Antipodes* (1640) where we encounter a married woman, Martha, who lacks any sexual knowledge. Frustrated in her attempts to consummate her marriage of three years, she decides to ask Barbara for help because she "cannot guess / What a man does in child-getting" (1.1.264). Not only does she ask Barbara to explain heterosexual sex to her verbally, but she also says: "I'll lie with you and practise, if you please. / Pray take me for a night or two" (1.1.265). Here, female same-sex sexual practices are in service of heterosexual marriage and are displayed as something through which women can innocently practice and expand their sexual knowledge and skills to please their husbands.

However, Martha also explains that she has had an earlier experience with a maid who had "kiss'd / And clipt, and clapt [her] strangely" (1.1.264) which does not seem to have provided her with knowledge about sexual acts with men. Both the reference to the possibility of female same-sex sexual practices taking place in a shared bed and the sexual approaches from the maid show how the shared bed is a space which can enable female same-sex erotic intimacies and how some women, such as the maid, employ the erotic same-sex potential of this space in the pursuit of female same-sex sexual practices as an end in itself rather than in service of men. As a result, the attempt to subordinate female same-sex sexual practices to heterosexual sexual practices is undermined.

The possibilities of female same-sex sexual practices taking place in the shared bed are also illustrated in the pornographies of the seventeenth century. In these pornographies, the necessary sexual knowledge and skills, as in Brome's play, are often acquired through sexual practices between women. As a result, these texts recognise that women can become sexual subjects through learning and can experience sexual desires and pleasures. In Nicolas Chorier's pornographic text *Satyra Sotadica* (1660), published as *A Dialogue between a Married Lady and a Maid* (1683) in England, women gain more sexual knowledge and skills through sexual acts with other women. Here, Tullia, the married woman, introduces Ottavia to sex to prepare her for her later married life. Although the text continually denies that full sexual gratification can be achieved without the presence of a man, both women simultaneously undermine this by expressing their desire for each other. This way, the dialogues between the two women "both challenge … a male reader's sexual identity and … open up space for a liberating redefinition of female sexuality" (Mourão 578). However, although this literary trope does construct women as sexual subjects and emphasises the necessity of acquiring sexual knowledge and skills, female same-sex sexual practices do remain subordinated to the demands of marital, heterosexual sex.

1.4. Tribades and Enlarged Clitorises: The Rise of Male Anxiety over Female Sexual Pleasure

The changing perceptions of female sexual pleasure and gratification are one final element that may have contributed to the increasing male anxiety over female friendships. The implications of female same-sex sexual practices portrayed in travel narratives, plays, poems, pornographies, religious treatises, and medical texts caused the formulation of a female sexual subjectivity and the possibility of

women achieving sexual gratification without a man. Where first a penis, and the release of seed, was thought to be the main instrument in achieving female sexual gratification, what Traub terms the "re-discovery of the clitoris" (87, 2002) unsettled this belief. Now, the clitoris was 're-discovered' as "the principal seat of women's enjoyment in intercourse" (q.t. in Crawford and Gowing, 151) by Realdi Colombi in his *De re Anatomica* (1599). Although the 're-discovery' of "the clitoris medically and ideologically legitimized female erotic pleasure" (Traub 16, 2002), because without sexual pleasure and orgasm conception was thought to be impossible, it also caused male anxiety since the previously male prerogative of providing sexual gratification for women and 'natural' penetration came to be threatened by the clitoris.

Colombi states that the clitoris is so sensitive that if you "touch it with your little finger, the pleasure causes their seed to flow forth in all directions, swifter than the wind" (q.t. in Crawford and Gowing, 151). Therefore, female sexual gratification could now be achieved purely through touch rather than male penetration. Moreover, according to Alexander Read in *The Manuall of the Anatomy* (1650), the clitoris is similar to the penis in that "it suffereth erection, and falling; It may be called a womans prick. In some women it hath been as big as a mans" (121). As a result, the enlarged clitoris could be used by women who possessed one, called tribades or fricatives, to penetrate both men and women. Such use of an enlarged clitoris was widely condemned, such as by Helkiah Crooke in his *Microcosmographia* (1615), who says that "this part it is which those wicked women do abuse called *Tribades* (often mentioned by many authors, and in some states worthily punished) to their mutual and unnatural lusts" (148).

Moreover, apart from enabling tribades to penetrate both men and women, the enlarged clitoris was also thought to hinder penetration by men, thus forming an obstacle to conception. The reasons behind an enlarged clitoris were up for debate. Medical authorities were unsure whether it was the result of the 'abuse' of the clitoris through 'fretting' and 'rubbing' it oneself or with other women or whether it was a sign of a predetermined sexually excessive nature. However, whatever the cause behind the growth, the enlarged clitoris was regarded as a universal sign of sexually transgressive women, and especially of those who engaged in same-sex sexual practices.

According to Andreadis, “the enlarged clitoris and female appropriation of male sexual behaviors seem to have been an obsessive concern of anatomists and other male writers” (4, 2001), where the anxiety can mainly be located in the fear that a male penis might become redundant in the sexual gratification of women. This anxiety can be seen in early modern texts such as the poem “*Fricatrices*” (1674) by Edward Howard. In this poem, two women attempt to have sex with each other. However, during this attempt they find out that “what Nature to their aid did next present, / We must suppose was short of their intent” (506), which likely indicates that neither of the women possesses an enlarged clitoris. As a result, “soon their pleasures were deceived, to find / The one thing wanted to which both had mind” (506), which causes the speaker to state that it was “a man they wanted, and a man would have, / Since he the dildo has which Nature gave” (506). Here, Howard attempts to alleviate male anxiety over the redundancy of a male penis by characterising female same-sex sexual practices by a sense of lack, which was a commonly used tactic employed to make female same-sex sexual practices or the use of artificial penises such as dildoes seem insignificant and unthreatening.

While such discourses on sexually transgressive women were carefully avoided by women writers who established a literary mode for the expression of ‘chaste’ female friendship, these women writers, such as Philips and, especially, Behn, also cleverly hinted at or covertly employed images from such discourses. Therefore, by adapting elements from a variety of the non-literary and literary discourses set out above, Philips and Behn reclaimed the possibilities of female same-sex relations and desire or a queer union and constituted a female sexual subjectivity.

Chapter 2: Katherine Philips's Creation of a Poetic Mode for the Expression of 'Chaste' Female Friendship

Katherine Philips, or Orinda, is often regarded as one of the first English women to develop a poetic mode for the expression of 'chaste' female friendship, with Penelope Anderson even claiming that her "poetry exemplifies the most extravagant claims of early modern friendship" (131). However, although her expression of female friendship was 'extravagant', Philips was careful to manage her reputation and to avoid associations between her poetic mode of 'chaste' female friendship and discourses on female same-sex (sexual) transgression. The need to monitor her reputation closely may have been the result of her and her family's higher social position. Although Philips was born into a London merchant family, she later moved to Wales for her mother's third marriage where she met, and later married, the fifty-four year old James Philips, gaining a gentry status at the age of sixteen. Despite their differences in political leanings, where Philips was a Royalist and James a moderate Parliamentarian, the bond between the married couple seemed to be built on a sense of mutual affection and obligation. Awarding her husband the pastoral name Antenor, the couple had two children together, although the son, Hector, died after six weeks.

While Philips wrote some poems addressed to or about her social or familial circle, most poems deal with her female friends and friendship. As Harriette Andreadis states, "an examination of the materials of Philips's life and work reveals a woman whose emotional focus was primarily on other women" (57, 2001). Philips started the Society of Friendship, which resembled the courtly and literary fashions of French préciosité. However, her emotional involvement with her female friends went beyond an adherence to current courtly and literary fashions. Indeed, the Society adapted those fashions to distinguish themselves from a masculine world which they associated with "intrusion, intemperance, and conflict" (Traub 24, 2016). Focusing on the female friendships in Philips's life, scholars have recently examined Philips's poetry and letters for what they reveal about early modern female friendships, alliances, and same-sex relations and desire.[3] In line with this research, this chapter will

[3] Such as Valerie Traub, Penelope Anderson, Harriette Andreadis, and Sarah Prescott.

examine Philips's interaction, through adaptation and reclamation, with seventeenth-century discourses (set out in chapter 1) to develop a poetic mode for the expression of 'chaste' female friendship.

To examine this, it will first be considered how she adapted earlier traditions of male friendship, adding a female, gendered aspect to them. In her adaptation of the earlier traditions of male friendship, Philips focuses on several elements from these traditions and reconfigures them to encompass female friendship, especially elaborating on the issue of conflicting obligations arising from multiple attachments. Although Philips uses these traditions of male friendship to authorise her model of similarly intense bonds of female friendship, she simultaneously moves away from 'appropriate' female friendship by posing female friendship as an alternative to marriage and by emphasising the emotional intensity of female friendship and its erotic potential. She achieves this through her use of the conventions from male-female love poetry, especially Donnean love poetry, and its excessive, eroticised language. Philips was likely familiar with the conventions of Donnean love poetry since "Donne was read throughout the decades after his death and into the Restoration by men and women of various political and religious persuasions" (Scott-Baumann 113).

Philips's adaptation of elements from the traditions of male friendship and male-female love poetry interacted with other early modern discourses on female same-sex relations and desire. As a result, it will be argued that, in her friendship poems, Philips reclaims some of the displacement techniques used in early modern discourses on female same-sex relations and desire. She does this by using the Royalist plight during the Interregnum and the plight of married women to depict secluded, pastoral spaces as spaces of power and liberation and contrasts them with the violence and injustice of the public sphere and patriarchal society. In reclaiming the secluded, pastoral space for women, Philips simultaneously reclaims the homoerotic lament and Nature, where female same-sex relations and desire are now no longer seen as impossible or unnatural but, rather, are authorised, enabled, and paralleled by Nature. The cause for lament is now moved to the political and social reality of marriage and its expected separation between female friends.

Finally, Philips's eroticisation of her poetic mode of 'chaste' female friendship will be further examined through a focus on the motif of 'innocence'. Possibly taken from Donnean love poetry, where

'innocence' is never innocent, Philips uses chastity, virginity, and 'innocence' to eroticise her poems on female friendship while maintaining her status as a virtuous woman. The excessive language from male-female love poetry and the expression of a wish for physical closeness are in tension with the mentions of 'innocence'. As a result, the mode of female chastity which Philips poses creates a sense of "homo chastity" (Loscocco 536), where desire is located in sexual self-possession and non-hierarchal sex based on mutuality and likeness. Working within the early modern perception of female same-sex relations and desire as ultimately impossible and innocent, Philips cleverly employs this perceived 'innocence' to point at the underlying eroticism of 'chaste' female friendship.

2.1. A Society of Friendship: Adapting the Traditions of Male Friendship to a Female Subjectivity

Philips's poetic mode for the expression of 'chaste' female friendship arises from a complex adaptation or rejection of the various traditions of male friendship that were available during the early modern period. These various traditions of male friendship mainly came from Ancient Greece and Rome. Philips, as a woman writer, adds a gendered aspect to these traditions since they had previously been mostly male-dominated. She mainly adapts concepts from the Aristotelian and Ciceronian models of friendship. The former emphasises that a perfect friendship is based on a sense of likeness, where "one [is] drawn to the other by the principle of like-to-like" (Lochman and López 4). Such friendship can ideally only exist between two people who are loyal to each other and necessitates frequent contact. Such contact is mutually beneficial since it was thought to encourage virtuous behaviour in both friends. Although friendship was contrasted with the concept of *eros*, an emotional intensity was nevertheless present and encouraged.

This Aristotelian model was adapted by Cicero as *amicitia*. In this model, friendship became based on mutual obligations which have an ethical and political dimension and can lead to social concord. Later, Laelius and Scipio added a concept which Philips also adapts, which is the mingling of kindred souls which causes a bond of friendship that lasts until after death. These traditions of male friendship came down to the early modern period together with ancient narratives of friendship whose pairs, such as Achilles and Patroclus, "became commonplace emblems of friendship in ancient texts" (Lochman and López 7) that did not have the Ciceronian ethical and political dimension. As Daniel T.

Lochman and Maritere López state, all these traditions of male friendship "offered early modern writers a rich and varied texture of words, concepts, networks, gestures, and performative acts that could be appropriated, modified, or rejected" (9).

Similar to "Poem XLX" discussed in chapter 1, Philips can be seen to adapt or reject elements from these various traditions of male friendship in order to formulate and authorise similarly intense bonds of 'chaste' female friendship. Before formulating these, Philips wrote a letter to Jeremey Taylor asking him about 'appropriate' friendship. As a response, Taylor wrote *The Measures of Friendship* (1678). However, in this text Taylor adheres to the early modern idea, as seen in Montaigne's statement, that female friendship is impossible. His work excludes the possibility of female friendship and focuses instead on friendship between men and friendship between men and women, where the latter is seen as less strong or almost absent because of women's lesser ability to establish and maintain friendships. However, instead of subscribing to this idea, Philips, in her poem "A Friend", directly counters the early modern perception that women were incapable of forming intense same-sex friendships similar to those of male friendship. Possibly in retaliation to Taylor's response, Philips states that "If no soules no sexes have, for men t'exlude / Women from friendship's vast capacity, / Is a design injurious and rude" (ll.19-21).

In "A Friend", Philips then adapts several major tropes from the early modern traditions of male friendship for the expression of 'chaste' female friendship. Drawing on the Aristotelian model of friendship, she emphasises the importance of likeness and the voluntary nature of friendship. Moreover, friendship is described as a virtuous bond between two people, since "none can be a friend that is not good" (l.36) for which loyalty is important, as "treachery is here the greatest Sin" (l.38). To these elements from the Aristotelian model of friendship Philips also adds several from the Ciceronian one, which can be seen when more pragmatic elements of friendship are emphasised. Friendship here requires mutual obligations and usefulness, where "A friend should find out each necessity, / And then unask'd relieve't at any rate" (ll.73-74).

One difficulty which Philips faced in maintaining her female friendships was marriage. Seen as an adolescent attachment and appropriate way to prepare women for marriage, female friendships

were expected to give way to the demands of marriage in later life. However, Philips saw female friendship instead as something "Nobler then kindred or then mariage band" (l.13) that was preferable to marriage, moving away from the model of 'appropriate' female friendship. Nevertheless, Philips was aware that marriage and thus the separation of female friends was almost unavoidable. As a result, one way in which Philips differs from both the Aristotelian and Ciceronian model of friendship is that she focuses on ties of friendship in the face of absence or parting instead of on the necessity for frequent contact. She employs the addition made to the traditions of male friendship by Laelius and Scipio, where, even if the friend is not physically present, "Their soules know now without those aids to meet" (l.84). The emphasis on physical absence may arise from the reality that women faced in early modern patriarchal society, where their ability to interact with friends was subordinate to the demands of their father or husband.

Therefore, although Philips emphasises loyalty in her model of 'chaste' female friendship, she was also aware of the unavoidability of multiple attachments and marriage. As a result, she illustrates the tension between multiple obligations resulting from multiple attachments in her friendship poems. Philips herself maintained multiple female friendships rather than one and the Aristotelian idea that friendship becomes diluted when one has multiple friends is directly addressed by her in the poem "Dialogue of Friendship Multiply'd". This poem details a conversation between Orinda and Musidorus, where the latter argues that friendship or love between only two people is "envy, not affection" (l.6). Orinda, on the other hand, uses the river as an image to argue against multiple friendships since, "Friendship (like Rivers) as it multiplies / In many streams, grows weaker still and dies" (ll.13-14). This image may have been adapted from Plutarch's essay "On Having Many Friends" (c. 100 AD), where it is also used to argue that multiple friendships will lead to a weaker bond. Musidorus contrasts this image of the river by proposing one of fire, where "Love, like the Sun, may shed his beams on all" (l.21). Nevertheless, the poem gives the final word to Orinda and she counteracts this statement, ending with a declaration that, although she "honour[s] every worthy guest, / Yet [her] Lucasia only rules [her] breast" (ll.29-30).

In this poem, Philips seems to argue for a model of exclusive female friendship between two women which is preferable to marriage. Such a model may be seen as 'inappropriate' as it foregoes the possibility of having similarly strong attachments to a husband. However, such a model of exclusive female friendship is shown to be impossible in Philips's friendship poems. She directly confronts the problem of multiple attachments and obligations which emphasises the constraints on women's lives and the resulting inevitability that female friendships will end. Although Philips's poems generally seem to indicate that the conflict arising from multiple attachments and obligations should be met with forgiveness, the poems and letters that deal with the 'betrayal' of a female friend instead display the excessive language of a scorned lover. As a result, although Philips recognised the (female) reality of multiple attachments and obligations, and the demands of marriage and thus separation, they are not met with calm acceptance.

2.2. Adding Emotional Depth: Adapting the Conventions of Male-Female Love Poetry to the Traditions of Male Friendship

In the excessive language that Philips uses to describe her bonds of 'chaste' female friendship, she diverges somewhat from the traditions of male friendship, which avoid connotations of *eros* in the description of the emotional attachments between friends. To add this emotional, and possibly erotic, depth, Philips adapts some of the conventions of male-female love poetry. This adaptation is remarkable because, instead of using the silent, submissive female voice, Philips takes on the voice of the active, male speaker who addresses the female love object. Philips especially uses conventions from Donnean love poetry, which was characterised by its experimental form, complex metaphysical 'conceits', argumentative structure, passionate and witty language, and far-fetched imagery.

In one of her most well-known friendship poems, "To My Excellent Lucasia, on Our Friendship", Philips can be seen to adopt several conventions from Donnean love poetry. Here, the female speaker addresses Lucasia through the persona of the active, male speaker. The speaker then uses a conventional Donnean image when she states that Orinda had never "found / A soul till she found thine" (ll.11-12) and that before the union between the two friends the speaker was a soulless "carcass" that only "breathed, and walked, and slept" (l.5). Moreover, Philips also employs the Donnean

comparison between the lover and worldly things, where the lover's worth is estimated as more valuable when the speaker says that

> No bridegroom's nor crown-conqueror's mirth
>
> To mine compared can be:
>
> They have but pieces of the earth,
>
> I've all the world in thee. (ll.17-20)

Finally, we encounter the Donnean motif of 'innocence' which will be analysed more closely in section 2.5. of this chapter. In the final line of the poem, the speaker states that her design is "innocent" (l.23), which is a claim that can be found throughout Philips's friendship poems and letters. Similarly, the speaker in John Donne's poems often emphasises the innocent nature of his seduction attempts, as in the poem "The Flea" (c. 1590), where the "blood of innocence" (l.20) earlier represented the sexual union between the speaker and the addressee in the mingling of their blood. As in this poem, often when Donne uses this motif of 'innocence' in his love poetry it is used by the speaker to convince his love object of the innocence of a situation or request so that she will give in to his seduction attempt. Consequently, 'innocence' here often indicates a possibly sexually transgressive situation or act. Philips's use of 'innocence' in her friendship poems may draw on the cultural perception of female same-sex relations, desire, and sexual acts as impossible or innocent due to a lack of 'natural' penetration by a man. However, working within the conventions of Donnean love poetry, this motif of 'innocence' may gain another meaning, where it is used to covertly imply a situation with an erotic or sexual undercurrent.

Philips also adapts several Donnean metaphysical 'conceits', contributing to the argumentative structure of her poems, as in the poem "Friendship in Emblem, or the Seal". In this poem, Philips adapts Donne's 'conceit' of the compass from his poem "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" (c. 1611-2). Both Philips and Donne use the compass to indicate that the two friends or lovers are both one and two who, although they are sometimes separated, will follow and find each other. The language used to express this 'conceit' is similar, where Donne states that the souls of the lovers "are one" (l.21) but that "If they be two, they are two so / As stiff twin compasses are two" (ll.25-26) and Philips expresses that

The compasses that stand above

Express this great imortall Love

For friends like them can prove this true,

They are, and yet they are not two (ll.21-24)

It is significant that, although she adapted elements from the traditions of male friendship in the construction of her poetic mode for the expression of 'chaste' female friendship, Philips decided to convey her friendship poetry through the conventions of male-female love poetry instead of the emotionally and argumentatively less intense conventions of male friendship poetry. In doing so, she moves 'chaste' female friendship closer to the concept of *eros* and brings out the implicit eroticism inherent in intense same-sex attachments.

2.3. Reclaiming Iphis: Adapting the Homoerotic Lament and Relocating the Suffering in Marriage

Apart from her adaptation of the traditions of male friendship and male-female love poetry, Philips also adapts elements from the traditional discourses on female same-sex relations and desire. As can be seen in chapter 1, one convention that is often used to express or depict female same-sex relations and desire is the homoerotic lament. This lament was often expressed in an elegiac tone and seems to have originated from Ovid's Iphis myth, as detailed by Valerie Traub, where female same-sex relations and desire are delegated to the realm of the impossible, the unnatural, and the "monstrous" (Ovid 375) by Iphis who laments the impossibility and immorality of her prospective marriage to Ianthe. These characterisations became stock elements for later depictions of the predicaments of female same-sex relations and desire.

Although Philips employs these stock elements from the homoerotic lament, instead of focusing on the impossibility and immorality of female same-sex relations and desire, she brings to the fore the passion inherent in the lament and relocates the suffering in the demands of patriarchal society. Instead of being compatible with marriage, the marriage of a female friend usually entailed the end of a friendship. Philips illustrates this in her "Letter XIII, 30 July 1662" to Charles Cotterell, where she again uses the image of a river to explain that "we may generally conclude the Marriage of a Friend to be the Funeral of a Friendship; for then all former Endearments run naturally into the Gulf of that new

and strict Relation, and there, like Rivers in the Sea, they lose themselves for ever" (58). Since marriage and female friendship were incompatible, Philips, instead of depicting female friendship as a preparation for marriage, reconfigures this attachment as a preferable alternative to marriage. To emphasise the superiority of female friendship, Philips poses a negative image of marriage, where the public sphere and men are seen as a disturbing and disruptive force.

In her poem "A Married State", Philips describes "A married state" as something that provides "but little ease" (l.1). This poem lists the sorrows of married life for women which can be seen in other early modern texts as well, such as Margaret Cavendish's *The Convent of Pleasure*. Here, the women lament the sorrows of marriage such as a drinking, gambling husband who "beats [his wife] all black and blew" (3.1.112) and the troubles of childbirth and infant death where the women wonder "who would desire Children, since they come to such misfortunes?" (3.8.115). Similarly, in "A Married State", without marriage women have "No blustering husbands to create your fears, / No pangs of childbirth to extort your tears, / No children's cries for to offend your ears" (ll.7-9). As a preferable alternative to marriage, the speaker proposes "A virgin state" which is "crown'd with much content" (l.5) as "It's always happy as it's innocent" (l.6). Philips promotes a state of innocent chastity which returns throughout her descriptions of 'chaste' female friendship and which, as argued above, may have an underlying erotic meaning. In her poems, Philips rejects the expected compromise between female friendship and marriage which saw marriage as the logical conclusion of temporary, adolescent female same-sex attachments.

Philips employs the elegy not to illustrate that female same-sex relations and desire are impossible but to lament the demands of patriarchal society, with the social and political reality of marriage, that interfere with such relations and desire and which are, in fact, the things that make them impossible. Following this reading, the homoerotic lament and elegiac tone are adapted to mourn the physical absence of a female friend rather than the impossibility of the relationship. For example, in the poem "A Dialogue of Absence 'twixt Lucasia and Orinda", Lucasia and Orinda lament the physical absence of the other. While Orinda says that "Absence from thee doth tear my heart; / Which, since with thine it union had, / Each parting splits" (ll.2-4), Lucasia states that their separation is only partial

since their souls can never be separated. Orinda, less easily placated, counters that "Absence will rob us of that bliss / To which this Friendship title brings" (ll.15-16). In the end, however, both friends accept that physical absence also adds the joy of meeting again. Here, the lament has a positive function since it proves, rather than denies, the possibility of strong female same-sex relations and desire and, again, may point at an underlying eroticism in the emphasis on the desire for a physical closeness between the female friends.

In reclaiming the homoerotic lament and the elegy, Philips adapts and reshapes the characterisation of female same-sex relations and desire as impossible, unnatural, and monstrous. She recognises that female friendship is a temporary attachment due to the demands of patriarchal society and, as a result, locates the cause for lament in the necessity of marriage. In portraying 'chaste' female friendship as a preferable alternative to, rather than a preparative state for, marriage, Philips dramatizes the predicament of marriage and the ensuing separation for female friends. As she states in her poem "An answer to Another Persuading a Lady to Marriage", where she rebukes a man for wanting to court a lady, "She is a publick Deity, / And were't not very odd / She should depose her self to be / A petty household god?" (ll.5-8).

2.4. Reclaiming Nature: Pastoral Displacement as a Liberating Choice

In traditional depictions of female same-sex relations and desire which use the homoerotic lament and an elegiac tone, the pastoral is often used to "render 'feminine' homoeroticism insignificant" (Traub 175, 2002). However, during the seventeenth century, this elegiac pastoralism was adapted to instead "exploit the sensuality of adult homoeroticism while situating these desires in female-governed spaces that remain marginal to the social polity" (Traub 175, 2002). As in Cavendish's play, secluded spaces are reconfigured into spaces of freedom from intrusion by the outside patriarchal society that allow for female same-sex attachments to develop. Philips employs this portrayal of the outside patriarchal society as a negative intrusive and disruptive force, as in her poem "To the truly competent judge of honour, Lucasia", where the public sphere is a tumultuous space which lacks honour and justice. As a result, the private, secluded sphere is preferable since, "While I have this retreat, 'tis not the noise / Of slander, though believ'd, can wrong my Joyes" (ll.53-54).

In her portrayal of the public sphere or patriarchal society as a negative intrusive and disruptive force, and her portrayal of pastoral, secluded nature as a positive space of opportunity, unity, and power, Philips can be seen to be informed by the Royalist plight during the Interregnum and the plight of women in relation to seclusion or enforced privacy. During the Interregnum, Royalists were exiled from the public sphere and positions of power. As a result, Royalist writers tried to establish alternative spaces of power, often characterised by an interiority and a retirement from the public sphere. In an attempt to reformulate their exile to a powerless position or space as a chosen withdrawal, the private sphere was reconfigured as preferable to the public sphere. Pastoral retirement from the violent public sphere characterised by betrayal and political upheaval was often used in such texts and, as Hero Chalmers observes, "depictions of feminine withdrawal reflect the Interregnum royalist need to represent the space of retirement or interiority as the actual centre of power" (105). Therefore, in reclaiming the pastoral displacement of female same-sex relations and desire, Philips uses the Royalist plight of exile and seclusion and their tactics of reclamation to create a new, alternative centre of power located in the private sphere.

This relocation of the centre of power from the public to the private sphere allowed Philips to combine her Royalist sentiments with her experience of the plight of married women. As Sarah Prescott has argued, enforced privacy in the form of an enclosed space with limited power and contact with outside society was common for upper-class women once married. However, these women reclaimed this enforced privacy "as a chosen retirement and a moral choice" (Prescott 359). This chosen privacy can also be seen in the poetry and letters of Philips, who "recuperates Wales in more conventional literary terms as a pastoral haven" (Prescott 354). Although the relationship between Philips and Wales has often been read as one of exile based on some phrases from Philips's letters, Prescott convincingly argues that the relationship was more complex. Philips portrays the private sphere and seclusion as a positive chosen privacy and employs the moral virtue inherent in a retreat from the public sphere – especially during the Interregnum – to reclaim the pastoral and Nature as preferable alternatives to society.

In Philips's poem "A Retired Friendship, To Ardelia", a pastoral withdrawal "to this bowre" (l.1) where "Apollo's beams / Command the flocks" (ll.25-26) is contrasted with the hardships of the public sphere and patriarchal society where there is "quarrelling for Crowns" (l.5), "changes in our fate" (l.6), "Slavery of State" (l.8), "disguise" and "treachery" (l.9), and "deep conceal'd design" (l.10). Philips states that she and her female friends "the boisterous world disdain" (l.34) and that true riches can be found in a female, pastoral withdrawal where they can "Enjoy what princes wish in vain" (l.36). However, such 'retired' friendship is not the ideal solution for Philips since she still wishes female friendship to signify publicly. In the poem "To my *Lucasia*, in defence of declared Friendship", Philips wishes the two female friends to "speak [their] Love" (l.1). The tension between 'retired' and 'declared' friendship illustrates the tension between the need to retreat from the public sphere and patriarchal society and the wish to signify in this sphere and society.

In her female pastoral retreat from the public sphere and patriarchal society, Philips "positions Nature as fully *continuous* with female desire, a continuity intensified by Philips's use of images of pastoral retreat as the proper home for passionate women" (Traub 304, 2002). This can be seen in the poem "Orinda to Lucasia", where Nature mirrors the feelings expressed by the female friends. Lucasia is compared to the sun and Nature's anticipation for her arrival mirrors that of Orinda, where "weary birds e're night be done" (l.1) wait with "trembling voices" (l.4) and brooks "Openly murmer and demand the day" (l.12). Both Nature and Orinda experience the world as an eternal night without the presence of the sun: Lucasia.

Such poems suggest that Nature's wishes run parallel to those of female friends. Again, the homoerotic lament and the elegiac tone are caused by the physical absence of the female friend rather than the impossibility of their love, causing a yearning for their presence. Nature authorises, enables, and parallels these emotions rather than making them unnatural. As a result, Philips may have adapted the tradition of pastoral displacement to enable a move away from the public sphere and patriarchal society which hinder female same-sex relations and desire. Rather than a move away into the realm of impossibility and insignificance, she uses the reclamation of the private sphere and chosen privacy by

the Royalist plight during the Interregnum and the female plight of married women to reconfigure this pastoral setting as a liberating space of opportunity, unity, and power.

2.5. "As innocent as our design": Eroticising Chastity

As becomes apparent from the letter which she wrote to Taylor, Philips was concerned with her reputation and, consequently, a display of 'appropriate' female friendship which prevented her from being perceived as a transgressive woman. As a result, she created a poetic mode for the expression of 'chaste' female friendship. Laurie Shannon argues that the concept of 'chaste' female friends can be seen as the main analogue to discourses of *amicitia*. The characteristics associated with both concepts are similar, such as loyalty, political agency, honesty, and emotional restraint. While Philips's model of 'chaste' female friendship shares some of these characteristics, however, the underlying meaning of her use of chastity is not so much emotional restraint as the replacement of men by women as the recipients of those emotions.

The promoted state of chastity or virginity and a life outside of patriarchal institutions may be linked to Philips's use of a secluded, pastoral retreat. As became evident in "A Married State", Philips prefers innocence and chastity over marriage. To maintain such a state of innocence and chastity, she poses an alternative, female society free from the sorrows of the public sphere and patriarchal society, where women could live innocently together. This idea was common in early modern women's writing, since, as Prescott argues, many women writers use retirement "in the service of a reputation for virtue (religious and sexual) and innocence associated with a country retreat from the temptations (usually sexual) of the urban 'world'" (354). As a result, Philips may have emphasised and combined a retreat from the public sphere and patriarchal society, innocence, and chastity to write poems that express intense female same-sex relations and desire while remaining free from censure. She managed to avoid this censure by situating her writing outside of the sexual and religious transgressions associated with other societal spaces.

Moreover, Philips may have employed the cultural perception of female same-sex sexual acts as impossible, since there is no "dildo … which Nature gave" (Howard 506), and 'chaste', since they are an innocent way to prepare women for marriage. In doing this, she could exploit the perception of

female same-sex relations and desire as impossible and insignificant, and therefore avoid condemnation. At the same time, however, these cultural perceptions allowed Philips to employ the erotic potential of discourses on innocence and chastity. As has already been discussed above, following the use of 'innocence' in Donne's poems, Philips seems to employ references to 'innocence' in relation to her female friendships in places where this explicit reference may be used to signal an underlying erotic desire.

For example, in the poem "Content, to my Dearest Lucasia", the two female friends are "With innocence and perfect friendship fir'd, / By Virtue join'd, and by our Choice retir'd" (ll.65-66). The 'innocence' of female friendship is here supported by the emphasis on the virtuous nature of the bond and the displacement of such friendship to a secluded, pastoral setting associated with moral, chosen privacy. However, many early modern texts on female same-sex relations and desire use displacement to secluded settings to allow for possibilities of female same-sex transgressions, as can be seen in chapter 1. Therefore, the explicit designation of Philips's retirement from the world as 'innocent' and 'virtuous' may cause associations with those instances in which it is not. The otherwise erotic connotations evoked by some of the language familiar from male-female love poetry which Philips uses, such as her wish "To tell the World I was subdu'd by you" (l.16) in her poem "To the Truly Noble, and Obleiging Mrs. Anne Owen", and her emphasis on the desire for a physical closeness between herself and her female friends create an interplay of tension with her emphasis on 'innocence'.

Moreover, the exploitation of the erotic connotations of 'innocence' and secluded, all-female spaces may also relate to the use of chastity to point at an unattainable desire and sexual self-possession. As Traub has illustrated, Queen Elizabeth I used her chastity and virginal status to signal her political agency and a form of unattainable eroticism that gave her political power over her body and its representations. Similarly, "embodied virtue or chastity functions as a form of desire in Philips's (and others') writing" (Loscocco 537). Taking her cue from Jonathan Goldberg, Paula Loscocco argues for a broader understanding of homoerotic and queer union in early modern England. She poses a definition of homoerotic sex as sex without sexual hierarchies adhering to the active, dominant male role and the passive, subordinate female role. Such non-hierarchical sex can take place regardless of the sex or

gender of those involved. As a result, this type of sex creates a queer continuum which extends to other sexualities. Loscocco's definition of queer union therefore includes "the idea of chastity as a sexuality that is homo in its commitment to embodied self-possession and desire for sameness or likeness" (536).

Philips, in her creation of a poetic mode for the expression of 'chaste' female friendship, could be drawing on this perception of chastity, where innocence and chastity are combined to become "homo chastity" (Loscocco 536) and signal a wish for political and sexual self-possession where the erotic potential is contained in one's own body. The need for likeness to develop a friendship, adapted from the Aristotelian model of friendship, may therefore be employed by Philips to create an eroticised discourse of female homochastity, where the chaste body and likeness are eroticised. For example, in her poem "Friendship", Philips describes friendship as an equal, non-hierarchal relationship. She emphasises that friendship is based on likeness achieved through the mingling of souls, where two friends are united in love since their "two souls are chang'd and mixèd so" (l.25) that only "they and none but they can do" (l.26), making them "like ourselves alone" (l.66). In becoming one, the two friends are equals and thus do not adhere to the active and passive roles of heterosexual love, whose power relations are troubled by "Lust, Design, or some unworthy ends" (l.31). Once again, friendship is called "innocent" and "calm as a virgin" (l.59), but this virginal innocence based on likeness and equality seems to be based on a 'mingling' that designates homochastity and queer union rather than sexual abstinence.

Conclusion

Philips can be seen to have established a poetic mode for the expression of 'chaste' female friendship through an adaptation of elements from various traditions of male friendship from the Ancient Greek and Roman world. She brings a gendered perspective to these traditions of friendship and highlights the conflict arising from multiple attachments and obligations and the separation between friends. These topics were likely felt more acutely by female friends than male friends, since in the early modern patriarchal society women had less freedom and were subordinated to the men in their lives. Going against the conventional view of female friendship as an innocent, adolescent attachment that prepares women for marriage, Philips sees female friendship as a preferable alternative to marriage. She moves

further away from 'appropriate' female friendship by choosing to use the poetic conventions from male-female love poetry to write her friendship poems. In doing so, she brings to the fore the emotional intensity of female friendship, coming closer to *eros* instead of the advocated emotional restraint of male friendship, and covertly points at the erotic potential inherent in female friendship.

Moreover, in her poetic mode for the expression of 'chaste' female friendship Philips also reclaims some of the displacement techniques used in early modern discourses on female same-sex relations and desire. Rather than seeing pastoral displacement as a move into insignificance, Philips uses the Royalist plight during the Interregnum and the plight of married women to depict the secluded, pastoral setting as preferable to the public sphere and patriarchal society. Rather than displacement, the seclusion becomes a chosen privacy where women find a liberating space of opportunity, unity, and power. Pastoral Nature now – rather than adhering to the tradition of the homoerotic lament where it makes female same-sex relations and desire impossible, unnatural, and monstrous – authorises, enables, and parallels the development of female same-sex attachments. The homoerotic lament and the elegiac tone are instead caused by the political and social reality of marriage, its sorrows, and the implied separation between female friends that it entails.

Philips managed to reclaim the negative discourses surrounding female same-sex relations and desire and to erotise them through her use of the conventions of male-female love poetry, and especially Donnean poetry. She adapted the active, male voice, the suggestive and excessive emotional language, the wish for the physical closeness of a female friend, and the motif of 'innocence' or chastity. Here, instead of indicating an absence of erotic possibilities, the emphasis on 'innocence' and chastity allowed Philips to write her friendship poems while maintaining her status as virtuous. Moreover, the political and sexual connotations of chastity may have been used to create a homochastity which brings out the desire in sexual self-possession and likeness. Working within the early modern perceptions of female same-sex relations and desire as ultimately impossible and innocent, Philips cleverly employs this perceived 'innocence' to point at the underlying eroticism of 'chaste' female friendship.

Chapter 3: The Androgynous Lover: Aphra Behn's Development of a Poetic Mode for (Female) Sexual Freedom

Scholars such as Harriette Andreadis, Arlene Stiebel, Valerie Traub, and Dorothy Mermin have examined the works of Aphra Behn, or Astrea, and Katherine Philips together. The prompting behind this comparative approach may be found in early modern texts, where both women writers were often linked in prefixes and epistles attached to the works of later women writers of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. For example, in the commendatory poem "To Mrs. *Manley*, upon her Tragedy call'd *The Royal Mischief*" (1696), Mary Pix writes that Delarivier Manley's play is "Like *Sappho* Charming, like *Afra* Eloquent, / Like Chast *Orinda*, sweetly Innocent" (A3). However, although both women writers were linked in early modern literary thought, there were differences in how their literary prowess was approached. In Pix's commendatory poem, the association between Philips and innocence or chastity can again be seen. Contrastingly, and as can be seen in the introduction of this thesis, although Behn's work was regarded as praiseworthy, her reputation was less 'chaste'. Indeed, Behn was often regarded as a (sexually) transgressive woman. This may be because, rather than focusing on 'chaste' female friendship, Behn's poetic mode uses transgressive figures such as the tribade and the hermaphrodite and is more explicitly sexual.

Behn's manoeuvring of more explicitly sexual figures and expressions may have been enabled by the Restoration environment, in which "public discourse about sexuality in general and female same-sex sexuality in particular" (Andreadis 16, 2001) intensified. Moreover, in contrast to Philips, Behn did not belong to the upper-classes or the gentry. Although information on her early life is scarce, her father likely was a Kentish barber and she spent some years in Surinam while growing up. In the mid-1660s she married a London merchant named Behn from whom she separated not much later. Before becoming a writer in London, she first served as a spy in the Netherlands for Charles II during the Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665-1667). As Amanda Klause states, this background causes Behn to "[challenge] the centre/margin distinction" since she was "at once an outsider and a member of the literary elite" (25) whose work was extremely popular. As a result, when compared to Philips, Behn may have been less restricted by the need to maintain her social reputation.

During her career as a writer, Behn came to be highly regarded by her fellow (male) writers such as John Dryden. Her literary output was impressive, containing plays, poems, epistolary novels, translations, and, arguably, the first novel in English. Together with her presence in the public sphere as a published writer, her career as a playwright and thus the association between her and the theatre may be another element which enhanced Behn's reputation for (sexual) transgressiveness. Even though women were able to write and perform in public plays after the Restoration, the women associated with the theatre still encountered difficulty in maintaining a reputation of sexual virtue. However, the origin of Behn's reputation was not due to her working-class status and appearance in the public sphere alone. As Roberta C. Martin states, "it is fairly clear that Behn was 'attracted to' or 'in love with' more than one woman in her lifetime, whether or not she acted on those desires" (198). Behn can be seen to have maintained various romantic, possibly sexual, relations with both men and women.

Behn's appearance in the public sphere and her sexual explicitness have led Andreadis to argue that Behn was willing to "appear publicly transgressive" (16, 2001). However, this chapter argues that, rather than willingly appearing as a transgressive woman, Behn uses her place in the public sphere to challenge the early modern constraints placed upon women and undermine the idea that such behaviour is, in fact, transgressive. In many of her texts Behn rejects accusations of moral or sexual transgressiveness by pointing at the double standard and the social restrictions which women faced, thereby making the reader acutely aware of their pervasiveness and their own prejudices. As Behn states in the preface to *The Lucky Chance* (1686):

> Had the Plays I have writ come forth under any Mans Name, and never known to have been mine; I appeal to all unbyast Judges of Sense, if they had not said that Person had made as many good Comedies, as any one Man that has writ in our Age; but a Devil on't the Woman damns the Poet. (186)

Behn's preoccupation with the societal structures which limit women's artistic, social, and sexual life can also be identified as one of the main themes of her poetry. Where Philips attempts to adapt and reclaim the traditions and discourses surrounding friendship and female same-sex relations

and desire, Behn instead tries to make the societal structures which underly such traditions and discourses explicit, thereby uncovering their arbitrary nature. In doing this, Behn subverts such societal structures and creates a poetic space in which she can argue for an alternative system of gender and sexuality which emphasises mutual sexual pleasure and poses a female sexual subjectivity.

To examine how Behn created this poetic space, her use of the pastoral will be considered first. Working within the same traditions as Philips, Behn uses pastoral poetry to liberate herself from the existing societal structures and pose her own, alternative ones. As in Philips's friendship poems, the pastoral setting is posed as a preferable and 'innocent' alternative to society. 'Innocence' here ensues from Behn's use of the Golden Age, where free sexual relations were not met with condemnation. In her poetry, she uses the Golden Age and idealised pastoral Nature to pose a lost, paradisical society to which she wants to return. In this poetic space, societal structures and their restrictions no longer impede the development of a female sexual subjectivity and female same-sex and opposite-sex relations and desire.

Like Philips, Behn uses the conventions from male-female love poetry and adds a gendered aspect to them by adapting them to a female voice. However, instead of Donnean love poetry, Behn adapts Ovidian seduction poetry to bring to the fore the passion and eroticism inherent in her poetry. Although she writes her pastoral poetry in this traditional mode, she undermines this mode by subverting the gendered hierarchy of Ovidian seduction poetry, both by blurring and, sometimes, fully reversing the traditional gender roles of the swan and the nymph as the dominant male and the passive female. It is argued here that, as a result, Behn uses Ovidian seduction poetry to create a female sexual subjectivity, where the nymph also participates in the sexual action and voices her desire, and a form of non-hierarchal sex based on mutuality and likeness.

In the seduction scenes, pastoral Nature, as in Philips's poetry, now authorises, enables and parallels rather than opposes the expression and practice of a more fluid sexuality, creating a pastoral setting which is an extension of the lovers. However, taking this reclamation of pastoral Nature further than Philips, in Behn's poetry Nature can be seen to not only enable but also actively participate in the action. This active role of pastoral Nature also functions to add a third, androgynous participant to the

sexual action. The creation of an androgynous lover can be found elsewhere in Behn's poetry, where she draws on early modern discourses of the hermaphroditic and tribadic body and complicates the cultural gender signifiers.

In her own life Behn herself displayed "androgynous characteristics, which were seen as the desirable reconciliation of her arguably masculine mind with her apparently feminine physique" (Stiebel 161). That this reconciliation is, in fact, regarded as desirable by Behn can be seen by her description of the androgynous lover as the perfect lover who encompasses the best of both sexes. Moreover, here it is argued that Behn uses the figure of the androgynous lover as the 'solution' to the social restrictions faced by early modern women because they enable the lovers to avoid the early modern social and/or legal condemnation attached to both opposite-sex sexual acts outside of wedlock and same-sex sexual acts. As Traub states, "Behn clearly is laying claim to the pleasure of female-female eroticism under the auspices of the hermaphrodite's doubled body" (319, 2002). As a result, the early modern medical texts, midwifery manuals, and female gossip – with their mentions of tribades, hermaphrodites, and miraculous sex-changes through a genital inversion – allowed Behn to pose a more fluid model of sexuality before the binary division into hetero- and homosexuality was established.

3.1. The Golden Age: The Pastoral Space as a Paradisical Garden of Female Desire

Most of Behn's poems are pastoral poems or contain pastoral elements. She can be seen to adapt this usually male tradition to a female voice to create a poetic space where female desire can be freely expressed and practised. Usually a genre characterised by oppositions, mainly between the natural and cultured world, Behn instead brings out the instability in such oppositions and shows their overlap. Not strictly characterised by a withdrawal from the public sphere and patriarchal society, Behn's pastoral space is used to comment on elements of this sphere and society, especially in relation to the gender-hierarchy. As can be seen in her preface to *The Lucky Chance* above, Behn was preoccupied with the social restrictions placed upon women. Such sentiments are again expressed in her epilogue to the play *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678), where she wonders "What has poor Woman done that she must be, / Debar'd from Sense and sacred Poetrie?" (92). She sees this exclusion of women as a deteriorated state, since in

the past women "once were fam'd in Story, and cou'd write / Equal to Men; cou'd Govern, nay, cou'd Fight" (92).

By situating female power in the past, Behn creates a sense of yearning for a lost age in which women were allowed more freedom, both artistic, social, and sexual. To emphasise this, Behn employs the concept of the classical Golden Age in her pastoral poetry. Reminiscent of the Christian Edenic Garden, the Golden Age was a period of fertility, peace, justice, and plenty which was rudely disturbed by human conflict. Using elements from Theocritus's "Idyll 12" (273 BC) and Ovid's "Four Ages" from his *Metamorphoses*, Behn creates her own version of the Golden Age which is delineated most clearly in her poem by the same name. In "The Golden Age", Behn paraphrases the opening chorus from the play *Aminta* (1573) by Torquato Tasso. By characterising her poem as a translation, Behn authorises her vision of the Golden Age. However, in her 'translation', Behn can be seen to divert significantly from Tasso's original, subtly proposing her own view of an ideal, past society.

The initial description of the Golden Age in the poem contains all the natural elements familiar from the pastoral, such as "Eternal Spring" (l.5), "Groves" (l.9), "fragrant" (l.1) "Wreaths of Flowers" (l.9), and leaves which provide "Shade" (l.7) and "a Bed" (l.8). As in Philips's poems, Nature is personified as actively striving to provide humans with happiness and comfort. However, this perfect union between Nature and humans, where Nature "[yields] of her own accord her plentious Birth" (l.33), is disturbed by human intervention. Drawing on Ovid's description in the "Four Ages", the union is disrupted by agriculture, expansion, and war. The Golden Age ends when humans decide to plough the earth, who is described as a "Virgin" and whose ploughing is seen as "rude Rapes" (l.32). Such imagery emphasises the violent nature of the intrusion by humans. Together with the longer descriptions of the Golden Age prior to human intervention than in Tasso's original, this imagery makes the eventual 'ruin' of the Golden Age more climactic than in *Aminta*. In Behn's poem, the reader is impelled to truly mourn the lost Golden Age and look back on its characteristics with nostalgic yearning.

Behn's poem also differs from Tasso's chorus in her definition of the concept of honour. Where Tasso uses the Golden Age to encourage anti-war sentiments and, to this end, questions male honour in battle, Behn questions specifically female honour. In her poem, honour is similarly "cursed" (l.117),

but now because it was the "first [who] didst damn, / A woman to the Sin of shame" (ll.117-118) and this way "hindred mankind" (l.120). In paraphrasing Tasso, Behn manages to make honour an expressly female issue and to illustrate how societal rules restrict female behaviour. The arbitrary nature of such rules is emphasised when she rejects the monarchs who arrived after the Golden Age as "Those Arbitrary Rulers over men" (l.52). Their rules limit the freedom enabled by the previous Golden Age where such hierarchal and gendered constraints were unnecessary. As a result, such arbitrary rule prevents the return to an ideal society like that of the Golden Age.

Behn illustrates how a freedom from arbitrary constraints will lead to an ideal society when she changes Tasso's chorus into a seduction poem in which a rejection of female honour will lead to sexual freedom and pleasure. Behn sees the Golden Age as an ideal past which can be retrieved when female honour is rejected, as can be seen when the speaker commands honour to "Be gone! and let the Golden age again" (l.166). This will allow women the freedom to voice their desires and constitute themselves as sexual subjects since they now can say "What all your Arts would keep conceal'd" (l.169). In such a pastoral space, there is no gendered hierarchy. As a result, such a space entails new concepts of love, desire, and (sexual) relations. Such relations are now no longer based on positions of dominance and subordination, but instead on mutuality and reciprocity. Therefore, they may be seen as similar to those defined earlier as homochastity and queer union in relation to Philips's pastoral poems in that non-hierarchical sex based on mutuality and likeness is promoted. As a result, Behn's adaptation of the pastoral and the Golden Age "[challenges] the heteronormativity in the pastoral tradition and in culture at large" (Laudien 2).

In Behn's pastoral poems, a sexual liberation through the dissolution of a gendered hierarchy can only take place when societal rules that constrain women's behaviour are removed and women are constituted as fully-fledged social and sexual subjects. Now, women can express their desires without a fear of condemnation. As a result, rather than using the Golden Age to render female same-sex relations and desire insignificant, as Traub argues this trope usually achieves, Behn poses the Golden Age as a preferable alternative society. Instead of rendering female same-sex relations and desire insignificant, the Golden Age illustrates how the free expression of such relations and desire and that

of a female sexual subjectivity function to create a more harmonious society to which she wants to return.

As Elizabeth V. Young argues, “Behn recognizes that to free the mind of its socially-dictated restraints is to change the world” (531). Behn achieves this not only by illustrating the constraints which such arbitrary rules place on individuals, but also by illustrating that the perceived differences between men and women are equally arbitrary. Instead of adhering to the early modern idea that women were created subordinate to men, with a weaker disposition of both mind and body, Behn illustrates how such differences are cultural instead of biological. The three strategies which Behn employs within her pastoral poetry to illustrate this are examined below. They are identified as a subversion of the male and female roles in traditional Ovidian seduction poetry, the personification of pastoral Nature as an active participant in the sexual action, and the blurring or reversing of gender roles and signifiers.

3.2. Subverted Ovidian Seduction Poetry and the Expression of a Female Sexual Subjectivity

While Philips uses the conventions of (Donnean) male-female love poetry in her friendship poems, Behn conveys her pastoral poems in a more traditional mode, using Ovidian seduction poetry with the classical figures of the swan and the nymph. However, Behn does adapt this type of seduction poetry to a female voice, as in “Verses design’d by Mrs. A. Behn”, where the female speaker uses an active, male voice to address a female love object. Moreover, in some pastoral poems she can be seen to blur the lines between the traditional, gendered roles of the swan and the nymph as the seducer and the seduced. In the poem “A Song to a Scotish Tune”, the gendered hierarchy between the male and female roles is collapsed. In its place, Behn describes a love based on mutuality and reciprocity, where both lovers are equal and, rather than attempting to gain sexual gratification through the violent pursuit of a nymph, the swan “treated [her] thus soft” (l.15) and “every Grace displayd” (l.21).

Although there is a focus on Jemmy’s successful seduction of the female speaker who “cou’d not say him nay” (l.8) in the beginning of the poem, once he leaves the focus of the poem shifts from a focus on Jemmy’s desire and successful seduction to the desires of the female speaker. The intrusion of war on the pastoral setting, reminiscent of the disturbance of the Golden Age, causes Jemmy to leave. His role is changed from that of a shepherd into a warrior. As a result, the identity of the female speaker

is brought into question, causing her to wonder "Then what becomes of me?" (l.32). The poem now focuses on her loss, which Heidi Laudien locates in "the inevitable absence of her sexual pleasure" (59). As a result, Behn creates a female sexual subjectivity, where women have sexual desires similar to those of men. The male gaze of the seducer is re-directed, where now "the gaze is two-fold in that the speaker simultaneously watches her lover and reflects upon herself as the beloved" (Laudien 60).

Apart from blurring the lines between the traditional roles of the swan and the nymph, or the seducer and the seduced, Behn can also be seen to sometimes reverse these roles fully. In her poem "The Complaint", for example, Behn reverses the gendered roles of the traditional pastoral lament. Instead of an abandoned nymph mourning the loss of her deceitful male lover, we now have a swan who "to the Pittying streames … did Complaine" (l.3) and a nymph who is a "false Charming Maid" (l.4). Illustrating the reversibility of traditional gendered roles, the swan is now the one who laments his loss and displays feelings of dejection, imploring the nymph to be kind to him and pity him.

Such a blurring or reversal of the gendered roles of the pastoral allows Behn to formulate a female subjectivity by creating a space for women to voice their (sexual) desires and partake in a non-hierarchal relationship, as in her poem "The Willing Mistriss". Here, although the swan initiates the action by giving kisses, the female speaker, instead of expressing "the chaste disdain anticipated" (Mermin 345), responds without the usual moral conflict. Such expressions of sexual desire by women, unhindered by the arbitrary constraints of society, are enabled by the pastoral setting, which is "secur'd from humane Eyes" (l.5). In the "Grove" (l.1) where "the Trees did shade us" (l.2) a mutual, non-hierarchal sexual relationship can take place where

> A many Kisses he did give:
>
> And I return'd the same
>
> Which made me willing to receive
>
> That which I dare not name. (ll.13-16)

Even though the reception of "that which I dare not name" likely points at phallic penetration, the woman expresses no regret or shame. Moreover, the last line of the poem directly involves the reader

in the sexual action of the two lovers, asking "Ah who can guess the rest?" (l.24). This call on the imagination of the reader may have been used to encourage them to discard the possible condemnation they feel upon reading about non-hierarchal extramarital sex. Now, the reader joins in the joy of the sexual encounter between the two lovers.

3.3. The Disappointment: Female Gossip and Male Impotence

Apart from through a blurring or reversal of the gendered hierarchal roles of Ovidian seduction poetry Behn also directly undermines male authority over female sexual desire. She does this, mostly, in her poems that fall into the 'imperfect enjoyment' subgenre, where sex is averted because the man cannot achieve or sustain an erection. According to Elaine Hobby, the description of such impotence may have been derived from midwifery manuals and female gossip. These two elements are combined especially in Jane Sharp's *The Midwives Book*, where, amongst other topics, Sharp discusses the functioning of both male and female sexual organs. In relation to the penis, she emphasises that its behaviour can be contrary to a man's, or a woman's, wishes, where "the Yard moves only at some times, and riseth sometimes to small purpose" (Sharp 23). Such 'unpredictable behaviour' of the penis, and the consequent subversive female laughter, can be seen in Behn's poem "The Disappointment".

In this poem, there is a more traditional gender dynamic with a male seducer whose "impatient Passion" (l.2) causes him to pursue Cloris "Who could defend her self no longer" (l.4). However, once she 'yields', Cloris seems to participate actively, although hesitantly, in the sexual action, putting her hands on his chest "not to put him back" but "Rather to draw 'em on" (ll.16-17). Cloris's hesitant action illustrates the conflicting emotions she feels since both "Love and Shame confus'dly strive" (l.22) in her eyes, pointing at the discrepancy between women's desires and the arbitrary constraints placed upon them to resist such desires. When she is "Abandon'd by her Pride and Shame" (l.65) and decides to "[offer] her Virgin-Innocence" (l.67), however, the shepherd is "Unable to perform the Sacrifice" (l.70). As a result, Lisander becomes "inraged" (l.85). Nothing can cause his erection to return. Cloris finds that he is "Disarm'd of all his Awful Fires" (l.113) which causes her to blush with "Disdain and Shame" (l.118).

It is significant that in a poem where the traditional gender dynamics are observed, the wished for sexual union is unable to take place. Behn's description of Lisander's 'disarming' functions to undermine male authority since male power, both social and sexual, is often located in the penis. In early modern discourses, the penis is often compared to a weapon both to indicate the 'warfare' of seduction and to express the dominant role of the man. Sharp uses this in *The Midwives Book,* referring to the vagina as the sheath which will receive the sword. She attributes the cause of its changing shape to the changing shape of the 'yard', saying that "Perhaps the fault was not the womans but his own, his weapon shrunk and was grown too little for the scabbard" (46). By participating in the female gossip surrounding male impotence, Sharp here redirects the blame for impotence from women to men. Similarly, Behn uses the 'disarming' of Lisander to rob him of his weapons with which to seduce women. As a result, impotence undermines male authority over female sexual desire.

Moreover, as mentioned above in relation to Cloris's conflicting emotions, Behn also uses this poem to again emphasise the arbitrary constraints placed upon women in relation to their honour or virtue. The 'disdain and shame' felt by Cloris and the language of sacrifice and offering function to dramatize the female predicament. While Lisander does not recognise Cloris's internal struggles over her "Honour" (l.27), Behn emphasises the difficulties of surrendering one's honour as a woman within early modern society. In the end, the disappointment and anger caused by male impotence are expressed by the woman as well as the man. This may be a retaliation against other early modern literature, where such feelings are usually only expressed by the man and directed at the woman. Lisander displays this common tendency by cursing Cloris since she "Had Damn'd him to the *Hell* of Impotence" (l.140). However, focusing on female disappointment, where no sexual gratification is achieved after the internal struggle about female honour, Behn also emphasises "The *Nymph*'s Resentments" (l.131). This way, the focus of her 'imperfect enjoyment' poems is shifted from male anger to female desire and the undermining of male authority over this and the female internal struggle caused by arbitrary social constraints.

3.4. "The Shepherdess my Bark carest": Eroticising Pastoral Nature

As in her description of the Golden Age, Behn uses traditional elements of pastoral Nature in her poetry. In her poems, the sexual acts, whether same-sex or opposite-sex, take place in a pastoral space characterised by groves, leaves providing shade, and babbling brooks. Like Philips's pastoral space, Behn creates a secluded space outside of the public sphere and patriarchal society. By establishing parallels between her pastoral space and the Golden Age, she emphasises the social and sexual freedom inherent in it. Behn shows that sexual relations free from the arbitrary constraints of society are more natural since they are authorised, enabled, and paralleled by a Nature reminiscent of that of the Edenic garden. However, she can be seen to take the relationship between Nature and the pastoral lovers further than Philips does in her poetry since Nature sometimes takes on an additional role, namely that of an active participant in the sexual action.

This additional role of Nature is used to emphasise the naturalness of a less restrictive approach to sexual acts. This can be seen especially in Behn's poem "On a Juniper-Tree". In this poem, the juniper tree is personified as the speaker of the poem. Underneath it, two lovers, Cloris and Philocles, arrive and engage in a series of sexual acts. At first, the juniper tree only enables and thus authorises the sexual acts by allowing its roots to be made into a bed for Cloris and by "kindly" lending its "Grateful Shade" (l.33). The grass takes on the role of Nature which parallels the feelings of the lovers when it feels "Ne'er half so blest as now" (l.31) when the lovers press "Their trembling Limbs" (l.29) on it. Through this, Behn uses Nature to authorise the union, showing it to be both enjoyable and natural rather than transgressive.

However, after this, Behn transforms this passive authorisation of Nature into an active participation in the sexual acts. The juniper tree actively attempts to join in the action, stating that "every aiding Bough I bent. / So low, as sometimes had the blisse, / To rob the Shepherd of a kiss" (ll.34-36). The two lovers seem to accept the role of the juniper tree as the third participant in their sexual acts, since they "Permitted every stealth [it] made" (l.39). The sexual acts of the lovers are described by the juniper tree, whose 'gaze' in itself constitutes a form of participation in the sexual bliss. The lovers acknowledge the enabling role of Nature and, therefore, express their gratitude to the trees in the grove,

especially acknowledging the juniper tree. In thanking it, “The Shepherdess my Bark carest, / Whilst he my Root, Love’s Pillow, kist” (ll.82-83), which further enhances the idea that the juniper tree participates in the sexual action of the poem.

The juniper tree can even be seen to take on characteristics usually attributed to male and female pastoral lovers. When Cloris and Philocles are about to leave, it mourns the nearing separation of the three lovers, stating that “My Grief must be as great and high, / When all abandon’d I shall be” (ll.88-89). Here, the juniper tree becomes the abandoned lover who voices a pastoral lament. When this lament “did in *Cloris* Pity move” (l.97), Cloris and Philocles decide to cut the juniper tree down and make it into the busks of a corset for Cloris. This way, the tree will be able to continue to participate in the sexual acts between the two lovers and remain near the private parts of Cloris’s body. As the third lover and participant in the sexual acts, the juniper tree illustrates a union between humans and Nature and, more importantly, a threesome between a man, a woman, and someone with a fluid gender. As a result, the participation of the juniper tree both emphasises the naturalness of acting on one’s desires and creates the possibility for genderless love or sex. The juniper tree, as neither male nor female, may illustrate an androgynous lover, the figure of which can be found throughout Behn’s pastoral poems and other works, as detailed below.

3.5. “Imagin’d more than Woman”: The Androgynous Ideal Lover

In the blurring or reversal of hierarchal gendered roles, Behn creates a space in which she can pose an alternative behavioural model for men and women not restricted by the arbitrary constraints which society attaches to their sex. The resulting, alternative dynamic can be seen, for example, in her “Love-Letters by Mrs. A. Behn” (1696), more commonly known as “Love Letters to a Gentleman”. These eight letters are addressed to Lycidas, who is most likely John Hoyle, a libertine who engaged in romantic and sexual relations with both men and women, amongst whom possibly Behn. In these letters, the traditional gender roles of the courtly love tradition are reversed. Lycidas is now a feminine man who behaves like the cold and distant courtly lady who is being courted, causing Astrea to comment that “he can be soft and dear when he please to put off his haughty Pride” (408).

With Lycidas as the haughty, "unreasonable", and "uncharitable" (406) woman, Astrea takes on the role of the male seducer. Like the scorned male lover from the courtly love tradition, Astrea laments the cold behaviour she receives at the hands of Lycidas, and wonders "how [he] came to be so barbarous" (403). Her tone becomes almost desperate at times, such as when she states that she is "profoundly Melancholy since [she] saw [him]" (402). She condemns his behaviour and attempts to rally against it, addressing him as her "Charming Unkind" and stating that she "Wou'd have gag'd [her] Life [he] cou'd not have left [her] so coldly" (411). She desperately seeks to get Lycidas to admit his love for her, but instead, like the female love object of the courtly tradition, he sets up "Laws and Rules" which Astrea must follow to "please and gain [him]" (409). As a result, these letters display the relationship between a feminised man and a masculinised woman, showing that such gender roles and behavioural patterns can be performed by either sex.

Behn detaches gender roles and behavioural patterns further from biological sex in the creation of an androgynous lover. To create this figure, she adapts the gender reversal or ambiguity inherent in the early modern figures of the tribade and the hermaphrodite. In her play *The False Count* (1681), it becomes apparent that Behn was familiar with the early modern midwifery manuals or medical texts which describe the figure of the tribade. Male anxiety about female sexual excess and the fear that this will lead women to engage in same-sex relations, enabled or caused by the presence of an enlarged clitoris, is expressed by Francisco in the play. To explain the reason behind his anxiety regarding the relationship between his wife and her maid, whom he thinks are "consulting and contriving" (2.1.120), Francisco states that "I have known as much danger hid under a Petticoat, as a pair of Breeches. I have heard of two Women that married each other – oh abominable, as if there were so prodigious a scarcity of Christian Mans Flesh" (2.1.120). His fear of what is 'hidden' under the maid's petticoat likely refers to the possibility that the maid is a tribade and can therefore penetrate Julia, the wife. Although Stiebel argues that Behn uses the figure of the tribade to ridicule the idea that women's sexual appetites will cause them to engage in female same-sex sexual acts, I would argue that, rather than ridiculing this possibility and thus defending women, Behn seems to play into it by refuting it while hinting at the possibility, ridiculing male anxiety rather than female behaviour.

That Behn does not ridicule the possibility of engaging in female same-sex sexual activities becomes evident in her creation of the androgynous lover who may be used "to undermine accepted notions of gender and sexuality" (Martin 194). This can be seen in her poem "To the fair Clarinda, who made Love to me, imagin'd more than Woman", where Behn deconstructs the traditional, hierarchal gender roles to create a seduction poem addressed to a woman to whom both male and female biological and social gender signifiers are attributed. The address "Fair lovely Maid" (l.1) is "Too week, too Feminine for Nobler" (l.2) Clarinda. The "Name that more Approaches Truth" (l.3) instead is that of a "Lovely Charming Youth" (l.4). The shifting between traditionally male and female gender signifiers and roles creates the image of a hermaphroditic or tribadic figure, or an androgynous lover, which is emphasised by the final line of the poem which states that they extend their passions and "Love to *Hermes, Aphrodite* the Friend" (l.23). Here, Behn directly refers to Hermaphrodites, the child of Hermes and Aphrodite in classical mythology who had both male and female sexual organs, to make the androgynous or indeterminate nature of Clarinda explicit.

In this poem, the androgynous lover is regarded as the ideal lover, since the "reciprocal construction of the poem … rejects the domination and subordination patterns of traditional heterosexual roles" (Stiebel 162). Therefore, Behn creates a space where gender roles are fluid and, as a result, within which a queer union can take place. Such a relationship undermines the limitations attached to sexual acts based on sex and gender. The ambiguous status of Clarinda can be seen to enable their sexual relationship when the lover states that when she calls Clarinda a youth this will "lessen [her] constraint" (l.6) since she can "without Blushes … the Youth persue" (l.7). She states that the androgynous figure "In pity to our Sex sure … wer't sent" (l.12), so "That we might Love, and yet be Innocent: / For sure no Crime with thee we can commit; / Or if we shou'd – thy Form excuses it" (ll.13-15). In her linking of 'innocence' and Clarinda's 'form', Behn, like Philips, draws on the early modern perception of female same-sex sexual acts as impossible and thus inherently 'innocent' because of the lack of 'natural' or male penetration. As a result, it is argued here that Behn uses the androgynous lover to avoid the early modern social and/or legal condemnation attached to both opposite-sex sexual acts outside of wedlock and same-sex sexual acts.

Conclusion

In her use of the pastoral, Behn creates a poetic space in which hierarchal gendered roles are subverted. Behn uses the classical Golden Age to expose the arbitrary and limiting nature of the societal structures which underly the 'appropriate' system of artistic, social, and sexual interaction. To illustrate the arbitrary nature of such structures, Behn subverts the gendered roles of traditional Ovidian seduction poetry by blurring or reversing them. As a result, women can voice their desires and constitute themselves as sexual subjects. The sexual acts now become non-hierarchical and based on mutuality and likeness, creating a queer union. Moreover, the reversable nature of the traditional gender roles illustrates that the differences between men and women are social rather than biological and that a subversion of them can lead to more freedom for both sexes.

Within her adaptation of Ovidian seduction poetry, Behn also writes within the 'imperfect enjoyment' genre to undermine male authority over female sexual desire. Drawing on midwifery manuals and female gossip, as found in Sharp's *The Midwives Book*, Behn shifts the blame for male impotence from women to men. By removing men's 'weapons' with which to 'conquer' women, Behn relocates the focus of her poems from the 'warfare' of seduction to the internal turmoil women face when deciding whether to renounce their virginity and thus their honour. As a result, the inhibiting force of the constraints placed upon early modern women becomes the focus of Behn's poems about male impotence. Now, the disappointment and anger ensue from the useless 'sacrifice' of the woman and undermine the male position as sexually dominant.

These sexual acts all take place in a pastoral setting where Nature authorises, enables, and parallels the opposite- and same-sex relations and desire. However, taking the role of Nature further than Philips, Behn makes Nature an active participant in the sexual action. By doing this, Behn emphasises both the naturalness of a queer union and the possibility for genderless sex. She elaborates on her concept of genderless sex by drawing on the early modern figures of the tribade and the hermaphrodite in the creation of an androgynous lover who reappears throughout her poems and other works and is perceived as the ideal lover. Through the androgynous lover, different behavioural patterns and sexual roles become possible for either sex, creating a queer union based on mutuality and likeness.

Moreover, the androgynous lover enables a complete sexual liberation since traditional gendered hierarchies are subverted. As a result, Behn uses this figure to manoeuvre the space between the social and/or legal condemnation attached to both opposite-sex sexual acts outside of wedlock and same-sex sexual acts. By doing this, Behn illustrates that the subversion of hierarchal gender roles allows both men and women more sexual freedom by liberating them from the arbitrary social constraints placed on the expression and enactment of their desires.

Conclusion

The poetry of Katherine Philips and Aphra Behn can be seen to exist within a relational system of interactions, both with non-literary and literary discourses, to establish a poetic mode for the expression of female same-sex relations and desire and a female sexual subjectivity. Although both writers have very different backgrounds and reputations, they both use similar adaptation or reclamation strategies. The pastoral tradition, used as one of the displacement techniques elsewhere in early modern (male) discourses on female same-sex relations and desire, features as the main genre in both of their poetic oeuvres. In using this tradition, both authors reclaim the pastoral space, rejecting its use in the attempt to render female same-sex relations and desire remote and thus insignificant. However, both authors reclaim this pastoral space in different ways. Philips can be seen to draw on the attempt to reformulate pastoral seclusion as an alternative, preferable centre of power by Royalists during the Interregnum and the attempt to reformulate enforced privacy into chosen privacy by married women. These attempts reconfigure pastoral seclusion as a moral choice and a conscious move away from the intrusive and disruptive force of the public sphere and patriarchal society. This way, the pastoral space becomes the real centre of power and freedom as a space of opportunity, unity, and power for women.

Somewhat similarly, Behn also poses the pastoral space as a preferable alternative to the public sphere and patriarchal society. However, for her the intrusive and disruptive force of the public sphere does not reside in its hindrance of female friendship but in the imposition of arbitrary societal restrictions placed on women in relation to honour and chastity. Therefore, Behn draws on the classical Golden Age to illustrate that the pastoral space is an ideal, alternative society where such arbitrary societal restrictions are absent and unnecessary. Within these pastoral spaces, both Philips and Behn provide a space for women to voice their desires and engage freely in different relations. Behn takes this freedom further and, by subverting the societal restrictions she uncovers, argues for an alternative system of gender and sexuality which emphasises mutual sexual pleasure and allows for a female sexual subjectivity.

In their reclamation of pastoral displacement, both writers also reclaim Nature. Previously employed in the tradition of the female homoerotic lament to make female same-sex relations and desire

seem impossible, unnatural, and monstrous, in Philips's poetry Nature authorises, enables, and parallels the development of female same-sex attachments. It provides a space for and mirrors the emotions of the female friends. The homoerotic lament and the elegiac tone are now caused by the political and social reality of marriage, its sorrows, and the implied separation between female friends that it entails, rather than the impossibility or unnaturalness of such relationships. In Behn's poetry, Nature takes on the same functions. However, Behn takes its role further and makes Nature an active participant in the sexual action. In doing so, Behn both emphasises the naturalness of a queer union and the possibility of genderless sex.

Within this pastoral space, both Philips and Behn draw on the traditions of male friendship and male-female love poetry available to them. Philips develops a poetic mode for the expression of 'chaste' female friendship by adapting elements from earlier traditions of male friendship to a specifically female perspective. In her attempt to display 'appropriate' female friendship, however, Philips can be seen to subtly navigate the boundaries between this and 'inappropriate' female friendship. Rather than using the language of emotional restraint common in male friendship poetry, Philips instead uses the conventions of male-female love poetry. Her adaptation of Donnean love poetry allows her to bring to the fore the intense emotions inherent in female friendship. This intense and excessive language, together with the yearning for a physical closeness of the female friend and the rejection of marriage in favour of female friendship, functions to covertly eroticise Philips's poems on 'chaste' female friendship.

Behn, instead of Donnean love poetry, draws mostly on Ovidian seduction poetry. Although this mode of male-female love poetry is the more traditional one for pastoral poetry, Behn transforms it by subverting its traditional gender roles, with the active, dominant swan and the passive, subordinate nymph, through blurring or reversing them. This subversion functions to again emphasise the arbitrary and limiting nature of the societal structures which determine the 'appropriate' artistic, social, and sexual behaviour of either sex. Now, gender roles are shown to be reversable and arbitrary. Moreover, this subversion also allows the nymph to voice her desires and to actively participate in the sexual action, constituting herself as a sexual subject rather than an object of the male gaze.

The blurring or reversal of gender roles and the related genderless sex detailed above return in many of Behn's poems and become manifest in her creation of the androgynous lover. To create this figure, Behn draws on early modern discourses on the hermaphrodite and tribade. The androgynous lover displays both male and female biological and social gender signifiers and, together with the blurring and reversal of gender roles elsewhere, allows for different behavioural patterns and sexual roles to become available for either sex. As a result, a non-hierarchal sex based on mutuality and likeness can take place. This queer union is shown by Behn to be the ideal. The ambiguous body of the androgynous lover enables Behn to enjoy female same-sex sexual acts while avoiding social condemnation attached to such acts. As a result, the androgynous lover allows her to manoeuvre the space between the social and/or legal condemnation attached to both opposite-sex sexual acts outside of wedlock and same-sex sexual acts, liberating both men and women from the social constraints placed upon them.

The queer union proposed by Behn can be seen in Philip's poetry as well, but she mainly configures it as homochastity. Throughout her poetry, Philips emphasises the 'innocence' and chastity inherent in female friendship. However, the eroticisation of her poetic mode of 'chaste' female friendship set out above, together with the doubled meaning of 'innocence' arising from her adaptation of Donnean love poetry, causes chastity to signal a masking strategy used to maintain a virtuous reputation. Such masking was enabled by early modern discourses on the inherent impossibility, and thus innocence, of female same-sex sexual acts. Consequently, Philips's use of 'innocence' may denote a homochastity, where the political and sexual connotations of chastity, in combination with male-female love poetry and a suspicion of virginity due to its association with Catholicism, are used to formulate a desire located in sexual self-possession and likeness.

Considering the differing tactics for eroticising discourses on female same-sex relations and desire, it may be especially interesting that Behn decided to draw on early modern discourses on the 'monstrous' tribade or the hermaphrodite while Philips purposely avoided the association between her poetry and such discourses. Considering this, even though Philips and Behn draw on very different figures available to them from early modern discourses, namely the 'chaste' female friend and the

‘monstrous’ tribade, both women writers use these discourses to pose similar ideas regarding the possibilities of female same-sex relations and desire and female freedom to express such relations and desire. The similarities in their intent and their adaptation and reclamation strategies may illustrate the beginning of the eventual confluence of the ‘chaste’ female friend and the ‘monstrous’ tribade. Where Philips adapts and reclaims the traditions and discourses surrounding female friendship and female same-sex relations and desire, Behn instead tries to lay bare the societal structures which underly such discourses, thereby uncovering their arbitrary nature. Both authors use the cultural discourses, traditions, and figures available to them and, through adaptation and reclamation, attempt to constitute an alternative, liberated female, or androgynous, voice.

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