

## *Early Modern Literary Studies*

### **Verse, Voice, and Body: The retirement mode and women's poetry 1680-1723**

Bronwen Price  
Portsmouth University  
[bronwen.price@port.ac.uk](mailto:bronwen.price@port.ac.uk)

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1. The retirement mode is a central means through which women writers produce what emerges as a feminine poetics during the late seventeenth century. In this period, a time in which, as Margaret Doody suggests, 'no literary era has been as conscious of what we call "gender"' (58), a self-consciously feminised poetics arose. Indeed, late seventeenth-century women's verse is frequently gender marked: it often addresses a specifically female audience, adopts subject positions that are explicitly feminised and, for the first time to any significant degree, locates itself in reference to other female writers.<sup>1</sup> While women poets wrote across a variety of genres, the retirement mode was central to the production of a feminised poetics and, as Carol Barash (6) and Sarah Prescott (40-1, 51-66) show, was used extensively by female writers of this period.
2. This essay explores the variety of ways in which women poets reworked the central features of the retirement genre and used the concept of withdrawal as a means of creating a feminine poetics. In particular, it will argue that while on the surface poetry of retreat might appear conservative and restricting through its associations with privacy, enclosure and exile, it is paradoxically these very features that enable a fundamental reshaping of feminine subjectivity together with a reformulation of women's conventional identification with the body. In this, I follow Judith Butler's concept of the body as being 'itself a construction', not just a medium from which 'a set of cultural meanings are only externally related' (8). The reframing of the body and how it is understood is therefore essentially tied to a fundamental reframing of identity.
3. Retirement poetry was of course a popular genre used by men, as well as women, throughout the seventeenth century. It comprises a range of standard features, whose origins derive from Horace. Its key stance involves rejecting worldly values in favour of a simpler mode of existence, usually, though not always, associated with rural life.<sup>2</sup> Generally, the site of retirement is defined in contradistinction to what is outside it: it appears to operate outside of historical time, often harking back to a period of lost innocence, removed from the interests of a world that is boisterous, vain, corrupt, and whose central concerns are motivated by ambition and the drive for power and fame. The site of retreat, while frequently pastoral, is usually presented in formulaic, undetailed terms, comprising shady groves, secret bowers and private glades. In this sense, it provides a topography which is implicitly feminised in that it is both an apparently private space fulfilling a maternal function of nurture and protection and one whose enclosed recesses are symbolically connected to the female body. It is also a domain of tranquillity and safety, offering room for private exchange between friends and quiet meditation. Indeed, the retreat is often an internalised space, reflecting a set of thought

processes, rather than a specific physical location: it provides an opportunity for philosophical contemplation, as well as reflection on and reassessment of the world outside its secure boundaries.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the speaking subject, while conventionally modest and retiring, also implicitly speaks from a position of moral authority.

4. Lending itself to a range of nuances, the retreat mode was a fluid genre, which could, as we shall see, be inserted into other types of poem. It is this fluidity which perhaps particularly attracted women writers in that its central features were in keeping with standard feminine virtues of humility and privacy, but could be remoulded for different purposes. If retreat is associated with an enclosed, meditative space that operates separately from social parameters, it could provide a sphere for different modes of thought, identification and being, enabling the possibility for orthodoxies to be re-examined and questioned.
5. Moreover, as Ann Messenger points out, 'the whole ethos of such poetry is founded on the idea of retiring *from* something' (*Pastoral* 59). But what is women's poetry of retreat retiring from? Why insist upon eschewing a world to which women had little genuine access? In this sense, the retirement mode may initially seem a peculiarly inappropriate genre for women writers to employ. However, Messenger's 'something' allows for a variety of possibilities. The retreat genre was, for example, especially connected to royalist poetry of the 1640s and 50s, often signifying withdrawal from an alien political landscape into a private, secure sphere in which the codes and rituals associated with regal authority could be maintained. Though it provided a continuing association with political exile in the latter part of the century, as Barbara Olive suggests, 'the passing of time ... allowed for others to appropriate it' (483). While retreat is sometimes connected to political exile in women's writing, it is also frequently identified with feminine poetic utterance.
6. Numerous critics have indicated how women writers used the genre. Barash, for example, traces the ways in which the royalist roots of this mode were employed as a means of creating a female poetic community and feminine poetic identity, while Prescott explores it as a means of fashioning the eighteenth-century woman writer. Claudia N. Thomas interprets its use more literally, suggesting that it offered 'an attitude' that could easily be 'applied to many women's circumstances' (194). Messenger follows this approach, arguing that 'Women poets often bring their experience to bear on the conventions of pastoral retirement poetry' (*Pastoral* 59). However, my interest lies in examining how this genre is used to recast feminine identity, especially through its investigation of the relationship between the speaking subject, the body and worldly matter. In this enterprise women poets do not so much insert themselves into a predefined form as remould its signifiers from within. In particular, feminine poetic utterance is repeatedly presented as being dependent upon physical enclosure and is often associated with the image of a closed body. This is a trope that connects women poets from a broad range of backgrounds and varying political persuasions. A sense of disquiet nonetheless circulates around the body, which suggests a working through of the seventeenth-century identification of woman with corporeal deficiency and disruptiveness and, more specifically, the uneasy association between female voice and bodily unruliness.
7. The range of cultural images that connected female voice and female body throughout the seventeenth century have been widely documented.<sup>4</sup> Engagement with and refiguring of concepts of corporeal corruption and contamination associated with female speech indeed form a central motif across a wide spectrum of women's poetry.<sup>5</sup> For our purposes one might immediately think of the poet who was so often presented as the model 'poetess' figure to later women writers: Katherine Philips, the 'Matchless Orinda', and, in particular, the corporeal imagery Philips employs to describe her literary production in her much cited letters to Poliarchus (Hobby 132; Barash 83; Price 223-5). The conception of her verses is associated with physical confinement and the innocent pastimes of a retired life. The apparently unsolicited and adulterated publication of her work, however, is aligned with 'bodily disease and mutilation' (Price 223) and even rape (Barash 55, 81-3).<sup>6</sup>

8. Of course publication was frequently invoked in sexualised terms at this time and, in discussing Jane Barker's work, Kathryn R. King reminds us of the stock symbolism of sexual/textual commerce in circulation throughout the period ('Jane Barker' 554). Indeed, critics like King, Margaret Ezell and, most recently, Prescott, have underlined the importance of recognising the varieties of forms in which women's literary production was conceived and of distinguishing between different types of circulation. King helpfully demonstrates how the line between public and private is not clear-cut. The coterie mode, in which Philips initially produced her verse, she argues, was perfectly acceptable for women writers as well as being a 'sociable' activity ('Jane Barker' 564). In Philips's case, for example, poetry itself is offered as a means of establishing friendship and the shared interests of a poetic and political community, as well as often being explicitly presented as a dialogic mode of communication, taking the form of letters and responses to events. Moreover, Prescott argues that the retirement mode was employed by women poets from the late seventeenth century as a means 'to authorize themselves as writers' precisely through the suggestion 'that they were uninterested in literary fame' and unconnected to commercial production. In this sense, she suggests, it 'should not be read merely as a capitulation to cultural expectations of proper femininity – a physical and moral retreat to virtue – but also as a deliberate piece of self-fashioning' (11 and 41).
9. Recent research, then, makes it clear that the material experience of women writers was not simply one of exclusion and isolation, but that writing was often a sociable act for women, was acceptable and marketable in certain contexts, and also received support from some male writers and friends. Anne Finch was admired by Pope and Swift and there is much evidence to suggest that her work in general was well-received by the contemporary literary establishment; in the early part of her literary career, Jane Barker was supported by her brother, Edward, and a circle of male friends from Cambridge University; while Dryden was one of Mary Chudleigh's supporters, bringing her work to the attention of his printer, Jacob Tonson (Ezell, *Social Authorship* 89).
10. Nonetheless, the sexualised rhetoric of textual activity remains: Philips, for example, insists upon the chaste innocence of her text throughout her verses, and yet eroticises female speech in, for instance, 'To my Lucasia, in defence of declared friendship'.<sup>7</sup> The body continues to be a site of unrest that is connected to the female voice and textual production, even as it is apparently contained or excluded. While, in Philips's verse, the retirement motif often seems to figure an insistently closed body that is cut off from the world, the body frequently re-emerges to be recast and redefined.<sup>8</sup>

## I

11. So what happens to this relationship in the women's poetry that succeeds and bears the influence of Philips? In what ways is the retirement genre used as a means of articulating a feminine poetic identity and how is the relationship between verse, voice and body played out? Anne Finch is one of the best-known exponents of the retirement mode. As Barash and others have shown, the concept of the pastoral retreat contains implications of political exile and 'shared political alliances' carried over from the Civil war and Interregnum periods (6 and 279). These connotations undoubtedly resonate with Finch's poetry. Finch indeed lived in rural retirement after her husband's refusal to take the oath of allegiance to William and Mary (McGovern, 56-7).<sup>9</sup> But this resonance also runs alongside those concerning Finch's position as a woman writer, something that is very much at the foreground of her verse.<sup>10</sup>
12. 'Fragment' (Finch 16-17), one of the poems that introduces Finch's volume of manuscript verse, exemplifies this. While this is a poem about political exile, its starting point concerns Ardelia's confinement to 'female Clay' (l.1) and the superficial enticements of the world, not simply to 'Retirement' (l. 22):

So here confined, and but to female Clay,  
Ardelia's Soul mistook the rightful Way:  
Whilst the soft Breeze of Pleasure's tempting Air  
Made her believe, Felicity was there;  
And, basking in the warmth of early Time,  
To vain Amusements dedicate her Prime. (ll. 1-6)

Ardelia's decision to retreat is specifically connected to the condition of being trapped in a female body and it is this in part which leads her to renounce worldly values, having implicitly, like Eve, been tempted by their allure.<sup>11</sup> Though she 'owns no less Desires' than before, she thus subjects herself to a life of 'Abandon'd Pleasures in Monastick Walls' – a fragmentary life, even if a virtuous one – as 'The lowly Means to an exalted End' (ll. 19, 23, 25).

13. The Preface that accompanies Finch's privately circulated manuscript, in which this poem first appeared, initially seems to define writing as one of these 'Abandon'd Pleasures', an activity from which the speaker attempts to be 'wean'd', as she puts it (Finch 9). Writing, in other words, is a form of fundamental nourishment which should be denied, but is also connected to infantile, sensual comfort, offering an alternative to the commonplace image of the poet-figure as spiritual parent to his offspring – writing.<sup>12</sup> Elsewhere in the Preface it is defined as 'an irresistible impulse' (11), an activity that is both bodily and beyond the body. Its execution by women is 'presumptuous', and thus connected to the fallen condition of Eve, something aligned with the very fabric of the verses Finch produces – they are 'imperfect', 'uncorrect', 'defective', their exposure being treated as a 'weakness' on her part (11).<sup>13</sup> However, her removal 'into the solitude, and security of the Country' ironically means that 'I cou'd no longer keep within the limits I had prescrib'd myself, nor be wisely reserv'd', engaging herself instead 'in the service of the Muses' (9-10). Retirement and enclosure unlock entry into the poetic domain.
14. In the 'Introduction' (Finch 5-7), the speaker's limitations as a woman are once again affirmed through reference to the Paradise myth. 'How are we fal'n' (l. 51), she states, alluding to the general condition of women. However, the irony here is that the fall does not concern the physical temptation of Eve, but society's 'mistaken rules' (l. 51), which keep women ignorant, debarring them 'from all improve-ments of the mind' (l. 53). These present circumstances are set against the liberty of Biblical women, whose writing of poetry is directly connected to physical freedom and active participation in social life. Nonetheless, the speaker decides to subject herself to her contemporary historical circumstances by singing only to 'some few freinds' in 'dark' 'shades' (ll. 62-4).
15. However, it is precisely these limitations which seem to prove enabling and liberating elsewhere in Finch's poetry, allowing for a redefinition of the concept of physical enclosure. Such restrictions appear to offer the possibility of a womb-like protection in 'The Petition for an Absolute Retreat' (Finch 59-68). Encoded within a web of Biblical references, the contained pastoral domain the speaker requests creates a protective haven whose intricate maze of meandering paths 'so lost' will provide her with 'unshaken Liberty' (ll. 4-8). Recasting Abraham Cowley's 'Solitude' (555-57), whose pastoral enclosure allows the speaker the freedom of carefree inactivity when he asks to 'let me, careless and unthoughtful lying,/ Hear the soft winds above me flying' (ll.16-17), Finch's retreat enables her speaker actively to forge a new pattern of existence. Encased within 'Trees so high,/ That the World may ne'er invade' (ll. 4-5), the speaker has no predetermined direction laid before her and can reformulate her relationship to her environment:

Let me find some close Retreat,  
Where they have no Passage made,  
Thro' those Windings, and that Shade. (ll. 101-3)

Significantly, in 'The Spleen' (Finch 145-9), though not a retirement poem in itself, the rewards provided by the act of writing are symbolised similarly:

Whilst in the Muses Paths I stray,  
Whilst in their Groves, and by their secret Springs  
My Hand delights to trace unusual Things  
And deviates from the known, and common way. (ll. 80-3)

Imitating the Horatian tag employed by Ben Jonson in *Cynthia's Revels*, in which the Prologue's muse 'shunnes the print of any beaten path;/ And proves new wayes to come to learned eares' (43, Prologue 10, ll.10-11), the enclosed landscape of this poem offers a hidden, productive domain, unrestrained by the terms that would otherwise govern the speaker's life.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, writing is not only conceived of as an intellectually fruitful pursuit, but also as a sensory pleasure, so as to unsettle the binaries between body and mind, movement and confinement, licence and boundaries.

16. Yet in each of these poems the contained, fertile world offered is provisional and vulnerable. In 'The Petition' it is envisaged as a place of desire in which to escape the material, implicitly Whiggish, forces that threaten the British state (l. 161) and to provide a fit location in which to articulate friendship with Arminda and contemplate heaven.<sup>15</sup> It represents an, as yet, unattained, idealised, religious sanctuary that highlights 'the sad Ardelia's' current condition, as she 'lay;/ Blasted by a Storm of Fate' (ll. 159-60). Indeed, in her present state, darkness and shade signal rejection and exile rather than protection and safety, for she is 'Fall'n, neglected, lost, forgot,/ Dark Oblivion all her Lot' (ll. 162-3), her identity itself remaining hidden until line 159. Not until the appearance of Arminda, who '(Guided by the Pow'rs above)' (l. 165), seems to symbolise Christian redemption, does warmth, love and renewal seem possible.
17. Barbara McGovern aptly suggests that this poem reworks Andrew Marvell's verse of philosophical retreat, 'The Garden' (Marvell 100-2), showing how, unlike Marvell's 'happy garden-state' in which man 'walked without a mate' in 'delicious solitude' (ll. 57-8, 16), Finch's retreat is a social domain founded on companionship (84). McGovern argues, further, that Finch's poem 'describes a real retreat ... rather than an abstract, meditative state', in which the natural world 'provides the means for renewing her spiritual self' (84).
18. Finch's site of withdrawal certainly evokes ideas of resurrection and salvation, symbolised through the figure of Arminda, who 'Warm'd anew' the speaker's 'drooping Heart,/ And Life diffus'd thro' every Part' (ll. 166-7). Ultimately enclosure leads to a state which paradoxically enables 'all Heaven' to 'be survey'd/ From those Windings and that Shade' (ll. 292-3). For Marvell, by contrast, retirement becomes increasingly internalised: it is a realm where 'the mind, from pleasures less,/ Withdraws into its happiness' (ll. 41-2). Although Marvell presents his retreat as a means of preparing for heaven (ll. 53-55), the migrating soul seems to melt into the interiorised poetic landscape as it 'into the boughs does glide' (l. 52). We discover that such a pleasurable condition is connected with the lost past of Eden before the arrival of Eve (ll. 57-8), while for Finch withdrawal is presented in terms of a conditional future, dependent on Christ's resurrection. In this regard, Finch's retreat is also surely 'abstract' and 'meditative' as it stays within the realms of aspiration, resting on the insecure claims of 'indulgent Fate' and the projection of a life hereafter (ll. 280-4, 290-3). Moreover, in such a state, the speaker requests 'For all Pleasures left behind,/ Contemplations of the Mind' (ll. 282-3). Like Marvell's retreat, this suggests a movement inwards. However, Finch's site of withdrawal lacks the sense of autonomy achieved in 'The Garden' in which spatial and temporal boundaries are traversed in order for the poetic activities of the mind and the location of retreat to become distilled into the purified essence of 'a green thought in a green shade' (l. 48). By contrast, in 'The Petition' the place of retirement remains tentative and is in danger of collapse before even being established, for it is defined in reference to external threats that suggest the uncertainty of a retreat that could ever be 'absolute' in this world.

19. In this particular, 'The Petition' may be compared to Sarah Fyge Egerton's poem 'The Retreat' (Fyge Egerton 31-3). As in Finch's verse, there are echoes here of Marvell's 'The Garden': retirement presents 'the Copy of lost Paradice,/ The pure and spotles Quintessence of Bliss', 'secure Abodes' in which 'the renowned Poets had their Birth' (ll. 23-4, 27, 32). However, the poem also defines such a domain as a 'kind Masquerade' (l. 16). On the surface, this description indicates the speaker's attempt to hide from Misfortune's searches, but it acknowledges at the same time the artifice of the haven the poem constructs, which remains vulnerable to external forces and again places a troubled perspective on the self-contained poetic realm Marvell creates in 'The Garden'.
20. In Finch's 'The Spleen' the poetic retreat is threatened not by outside forces but the internal, protean, impulses of melancholy, which are at once irresistible and 'perplexing' (l. 5), and whose corporeal effects on the act of writing signal the disintegration of the speaker's identity:16

I feel my Verse decay, and my cramped Numbers fail.  
Thro' thy black Jaundice I all Objects see,  
As Dark, and Terrible as Thee. (ll. 75-7)

Here, the physical dissolution of her verse is so fundamentally bound to the speaker's own interior state, that her writing appears to form part of her condition. 'The secret, the mysterious ways' of spleen, which 'dost surprise, and prey upon the Mind' obliterate 'the Muses' paths' in which the speaker strays, transforming the pleasure of writing into a source of doubt and uncertainty, 'An useless Folly, or presumptuous Fault' (ll. 144-5, 80). As in 'The Petition', darkness, shade and enclosure are given an underside: recast from being the means of delight, liberty and fertility (ll. 81-3), they come to symbolise the unfathomable, uncontrollable passage of spleen, striking its path through the very core of human identity. It is indeed 'too deep for Humane Thought' (l. 146), for even 'Men of Thoughts refin'd' 'Retiring from the Croud, are to thy Shades inclin'd' (ll. 70, 73), and even those who would seek to trace the cause and cure of spleen are:

Retain'd thy Pris'ner, thy acknowledg'd Slave,  
And sunk beneath thy Chain to a lamented Grave. (ll. 149-50)

21. In Finch's poetry, then, the concept of retreat is directly associated with the forging of a specifically feminised poetic identity, one that allows the speaker to digress 'from the known, and common way' and recast the terms of her existence. Reformulating the stock paradox in which physical enclosure enables spiritual release,<sup>17</sup> Finch's retreats incorporate both intellectual and sensory gratification, and place movement within constraint, sociability within privacy inside a frame of Christian redemption. And yet, in contrast to her male counterparts, the protective haven retirement seems to yield in Finch's work is often presented as being precarious, susceptible to dark forces that threaten to contaminate its productive poetic domain from both without and within.

## II

22. Enclosure, often presented as vulnerable, provisional or mythical, provides an important motif in Anne Killigrew's and Mary Chudleigh's verse, too, though this concept takes a range of forms. The Epitaph engraved on Killigrew's tomb (Killigrew, no page numbers) states that she was 'Contented always to retire' (l. 20), and yet retirement is often presented as a double-edged form of escape in her poetry.<sup>18</sup> In 'The Miseries of Man' (Killigrew 32-43) the 'fertile Pasturage' of 'Arcadia' yields an uninviting poetic landscape, in which the hill of Parnassus 'Casts o'er the neighbouring Plains, a seeming Frown', while the enclosed woods of its foothills comprise 'oblique windings through' 'gloomy Shade' that 'hardly will admit the Eye

of Day' (ll. 1-4, 8-9). 'This sad Recess' seems to serve as 'a fit Place' for 'The melancholy Cloris' 'to take the sad Relief/ Of Sighs and Tears' as she 'murmur[s] forth her Woes' on mankind's wretched plight (ll. 12, 14-16, 12).

23. However, far from providing release from her 'discontented' state, 'this Retreat' seems only to mirror her imprisonment within 'oppressing Grief' (ll. 11, 13, 16). Indeed, the itemising of the range of mankind's miseries results instead at stanza 11 in 'her further Speech' breaking off, for 'Her swelling Grief too great was to be spoke' (ll. 142-3). The articulation of her cares within the shelter of the shades makes her pregnant with sorrow, enveloping her body so as to render her voiceless. Moreover, the poem circles back to where it begins its examination of human suffering, with the speaker's desire for death:

Where the free Soul does all her burden leave,  
And Joys commensurate to her self receive. (ll. 226-7)

Only through casting aside the flesh and releasing the feminised soul is escape from misery possible.

24. 'The Discontent' (Killigrew 51-6) is similar in theme and tone to 'The Miseries of Man'. Here images of 'inextricable Mazes' (l. 12) and meandering paths are connected not with the pastoral grove, as in Finch's verse, but 'boundless Heaps' of 'admired Clay' (l. 27). Such matter is implicitly gendered masculine through the claims of fame and ambition, power and possession, as it is so frequently in Philips's verses. In representing these worldly aspirations, the speaker directs her muse to stumble through the formal frames of poetry as an appropriate means of critiquing her subject matter. In the process, as Messenger suggests, this 'poem begins with a good example of' Killigrew's 'power to control prosody in the service of meaning' (*His and Hers* 26). The awkward, ill-measured movement of her verse is ironically artfully crafted as it is required to be corporeally bound to the journey of mankind it portrays:

But let thy Lines rude and unpolisht go,  
Nor Equal be their Feet, nor Num'rous let them flow.  
The rugged my Measures run when read,  
They'l livelier paint th' unequal Paths fond Mortals tread. (ll. 3-6)

This voyage of endless obstruction (l. 13) is one in which the 'Head' is constantly led astray by the 'Senses': it is their 'dazle' which continually entices the head to 'turn round', both suggesting that it looks behind and turns upside down, leading its owners 'headlong down the horrid Precipice' (ll. 18-20).

25. Having surveyed a variety of material temptations, the speaker requests that she herself may transcend worldly constraints. Paradoxically, having imprinted the matter she rejects in poetry by allowing 'My Muse' to 'pronounce aloud' on the world (l. 24), she asks that it may be subjected to complete oblivion from her own memory to the extent where temporal boundaries are also erased:

Oh, thither let me fly!  
Where from the World at such a distance set,  
All that's past, present, and to come I may forget. (ll. 104-6)

The corrupting effects of such material interests are presented as physically disfiguring the speaker, 'What e'er may wound my Eyes or Ears' (l. 108), a condition from which she desires escape, but where flight is envisaged through binding the senses:

But *Stupor*, like to Death, my Senses bind,  
That so I may anticipate that Rest,

Which only in my Grave I hope to find. (ll. 117-19)

Indeed, the expulsion of invasive visual and aural matter involves a bodily incarceration and compulsive movement inwards so extreme that it procures a death-like, literally sense-less, state, in which the numbness of body and mind prefigure the silence and obliteration of the speaker.

26. As in Finch's verse, in Killigrew's poetry, then, retreat is the location for feminised poetic utterance, only here the conventional tropes of the retirement mode are pushed to their limits. Withdrawal signals not so much a liberation from as an insistent affirmation of the corruption of the world upon which the speaker pronounces. Her meditations on worldly matter elicit a desire to transcend the very body in which she is encased and to efface her position as a speaking subject in the very process of inscribing it. Indeed, in Killigrew's verse retirement from the world seems to demand a repetitive, circling pattern of withdrawal, in which death becomes the ultimate destination for and condition of retreat.

### III

27. The exclusion of the bodily through an insistent movement within is also a significant feature of Chudleigh's work and central to her definition of the writing subject. In much of her verse the speaker strives to achieve a state of complete self-sufficiency where the denial, discipline and confinement of the body releases, as in Finch's poetry, an active, inner life through which she may 'Read and Think, and Think and Read again' (Chudleigh *The Ladies Defence*, 39, l. 799).<sup>19</sup> Chudleigh's writing presents the body as an intrusive burden that we must strive to overcome: it comprises 'the gross Allays of Sense', 'cumbrous Flesh', 'heavy Lumps of Matter, which depress the Mind' (Chudleigh, 40, l. 842; 200, ll. 745 and 343-4).
28. Clearly the desire to transcend the bodily contains religious significance that complements the neo-Platonism informing Chudleigh's work. Moreover, her Preface to the 1703 volume of her *Poems on Several Occasions* claims that her poetry was the result of 'the Employment of my leisure Hours, the innocent Amusement of a solitary Life' (Chudleigh 44) in a way that echoes Philips's letter to Poliarchus. But, given Chudleigh's self-conscious status as a woman writer whose poems are dedicated to Queen Anne and are 'chiefly design'd' for 'the Ladies', 'to whose Service they are intirely devoted' (44), the philosophy contained in her verse also carries specific gender implications that has wider import than the alleged private meditations imply. Reworking Dryden's muscular account of self-mastery derived through the autonomy retirement provides in his Pindaric imitation of Horace's Ode 3.29 (Dryden 436), Chudleigh offers an alternative form of feminine identity to her female readers. Her advice to 'to retire into our selves' and 'to live upon our own Stock' (Chudleigh 45) reformulates Dryden's affirmation of self-ownership and control when his speaker asserts:

Happy the man, and happy he alone,  
He, who can call to day his own:  
He, who secure within, can say  
Tomorrow do thy worst, for I have liv'd today.  
Be fair, or foul, or rain, or shine,  
The joys I have possest, in spite of fate are mine (ll. 65-70)

Through presenting 'a Picture of my Mind' within the isolation and confinement of 'some obscure Recess' (44 and 75), she invites her readers to be self-sufficient and internally nourished. For her the body is not the defining principle of feminine identity (nor is woman's relationship to a lover, husband or children), but, rather in Cartesian terms, a distilled, thinking, rational, self-contained mind. However, where Descartes implicitly masculinises the rational faculty, in Chudleigh's verse reason is often feminised.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, contrary to Barash's view that in Chudleigh's verse 'Reason is coded male' (244 n. 102), there are plenty of examples that

suggest otherwise. For instance, in 'The Resolve' (Chudleigh 144) 'Reason' is envisaged as a queen, who should 'rule[s] within, and keep[s] the Throne',

While the inferior Faculties obey,  
And all her Laws without Reluctance own,  
Accounting none more fit, more just than they. (ll. 5-8)

Similarly, in 'Solitude' (Chudleigh 126-9) 'Reason' should claim 'her native Right' over internal Anarchy 'And strive to re-ascend the Throne' (ll. 99-100).<sup>21</sup> Here, as elsewhere in Chudleigh's verse, retreat into religious meditation becomes a means through which her female readers may be allowed 'with silent Joy' to 'think all their Hours away',

And still think on, till the confining Clay  
Fall off, and nothing's left behind  
Of drossy Earth, nothing to clog the Mind. (ll. 5-8)

As in Killigrew's verse, to be relieved of fleshly matter is not a deprivation, but a release from the superficial trappings, the 'glitt'ring Clay' (l. 68), through which women in particular are conventionally identified within 'th'unshap'd Embryo of the World' (l. 27). This liberation from the body will enable them to be defined instead as 'rational Beings' who may partake in 'sublime Employments' (45), and, in a manner similar to Philips's neo-Platonism, allow them to ascend the 'blest Society' of 'those bright Forms above' 'And grow as pure, and as unrefin'd as they' (ll. 16, 9, 21).<sup>22</sup>

29. Elizabeth Singer Rowe, who was known to Chudleigh, also often presents the site of retreat as leading heavenwards. But, unlike Chudleigh's verse, as Prescott has highlighted, Rowe's has a distinctly nonconformist bent (141-66). Like the poetic practices of her immediate Athenian circle, Rowe draws on the Bible, especially the Old Testament, as her 'greatest source of poetic inspiration' as opposed to classical sources (157). For example, 'Paraphrase on Canticles, 7. 11' (Rowe 40), which appeared in Rowe's *Poems on Several Occasions* (1696), uses the Song of Solomon rather than Horace to establish an alternative to 'this dull Society' (l. 2). Here 'the peaceful Shades and Springs' to which the speaker wishes to 'remove' are 'those blest Seats' of heaven in which she may 'in sweet transports give up all my love' (ll. 3, 10, 12). Unlike Chudleigh's verse, the focus of retreat is not on reason, but passion, in which heaven is the site 'where we'll our flames improve' and the speaker can demonstrate 'With how much heat' she shall 'carress' God (ll. 10-11). But, as Prescott indicates in her discussion about the poetics of Rowe's Athenian contemporaries, the poem clearly separates between 'the "Enthusiastic Passions"' of its Protestant sources and "'Vulgar Passions'", something which is 'directly linked to the overall Whig poetic agenda of constructing an alternative poetic tradition to replace the Tory-inflected neo-classical canon' (157). While Olive attempts to make a case for the nonconformist implications of Chudleigh's verse (see footnote 24 below), it is clear that it does not follow the poetic agenda of Rowe and her circle.
30. Nevertheless, in spite of Chudleigh's foregrounding of reason and attempt to sublimate the body in her retirement poems, her first verse in *Poems on Several Occasions* both encapsulates and complicates these ideas. 'On the Death of his Highness the Duke of *Glocester*' (Chudleigh 47-59) opens with an extensive preamble on the speaker's decision to reject material concerns, 'the gaudy Poms of Life' and 'shining Heaps of Clay' (ll.15 and 17), in a way reminiscent of Killigrew's 'The Discontent' and in line with the conventions of the retirement mode. Instead, she chooses to:

my time to nobler Uses give,  
And to my Books, and Thoughts entirely live;  
Those dear Delights, in which I still shall find  
Ten thousand Joys to feast my Mind,

Joys, great as Sense can bear, from all its Dross refin'd. (ll. 24-8)

It is the speaker's muse who leads her into the Arcadian 'shades' representing this self-sustaining, enclosed, inner domain. Locked within its own autonomous zone of time and place, it is so still and quiet that:

The Sun cou'd there no Entrance find:  
No ruffling Winds the Boughs did move. (ll. 45-6)

Yet the pleasures offered by this 'little safe Retreat' (l. 11) are eroticised in ways that reintroduce the idea of the body. The speaker's relation to poetry, the defining feature of this domain, is described in stock terms of a pastoral romance. She is:

Inslav'd alone by flatt'ring Poesie:  
But Oh! How pleasing did her Fetters prove!  
How much did I, th'endearing Charmer Love!

whose 'secret Sweets' enable her to spend 'my Hours in Extasies employ'd' (ll. 69-74). The paradoxical restraints through which poetic creativity is conceived are transposed onto the image of physical enclosure so as to produce a transportation that crosses the boundaries of mind and body.

31. Strangely, though, the most striking effects of such delights are anticipated by the voice of 'sad *Philomela*' (l. 51), who wanders through this poetic realm. In her detailed account of this poem, Messenger suggests that Chudleigh follows the standard descriptions of the 'pastoral beauties' of the retirement mode, 'including the song of the nightingale', and subsequently glosses over this part of the text (*Pastoral* 93). Spencer's analysis of the significance of *Philomela* to women's verse in general, though, signals how Chudleigh's poem may lend itself to a more specifically gendered reading, drawing attention to the way in which the nightingale was an important image for 'imagining a specifically feminine woman poet ... because of its associations with artlessness, sweetness and the expression of feeling; and the bird's reputed reclusiveness' which 'enabled the woman poet to avoid charges of boldness and self-display. Moreover, the nightingale was understood as female because of its identification with *Philomela*' ('Imagining' 109-10). This association, as both Spencer (110) and Prescott (142) show, was made by Elizabeth Singer Rowe, her pseudonym being *Philomela*. Olive even suggests that Chudleigh's allusion to *Philomela* may be a direct reference to Singer Rowe (470 and 484).
32. However, *Philomela*, as Ezell reminds us, 'was raped by Tereus, king of Thrace, who then cut out her tongue to silence her'. It was after this act of brutality that the gods changed her into a nightingale ('Introduction' 48). *Philomela*'s transformation from defiled woman into nightingale thus signals the mutation from female silence to song. Indeed, it is the sound of the song of this no-longer-woman that makes the speaker choose to 'to my self, and to my Muse be true' (l. 61) and reject the 'phantastick Forms' and 'glorious Nothings' of worldly matter (ll. 62-3). But this process of transformation is oddly conceived. While Spencer suggests that by the Restoration the figure of *Philomela* 'was removed from the violence of the classical myth' ('Imagining' 110), Chudleigh's poem at the very least hints at the causes of *Philomela*'s song by expressing both her 'Pains' and 'Wrongs' (ll. 51, 52). Further, it is *Philomela*'s song of 'Despair' (l. 52) caused by her rape that ironically produces 'Raptures' in the speaker (ll. 50-51, 57), raptures which are, in turn, decorporealised and elicit silence:<sup>23</sup>

Her [*Philomela*'s] Voice with tender'st Passions fill'd my Breast,  
And I felt Raptures not to be express'd;  
Raptures, till that soft Hour unknown,  
My Soul seem'd from my Body flown. (ll. 56-9)

Moreover, the 'glorious nothings', which are rejected in Chudleigh's poem in favour of a spiritual, poetic domain, peculiarly echo the 'lovely glorious nothing' to which the speaker of John Donne's 'Air and Angels' is attracted (Donne 41, l. 6). The latter poem employs a typical Donne paradox by punning on the term 'nothing', which signifies both something without physical form and the vagina. It does this in order to justify the speaker's use of the impure sphere of a woman's body as the vehicle in which to express his unadulterated love, while at the same time arguing that men's love is purer than women's: his love is directed towards nothing, but simply needs a location in which to express itself. While it is obvious that Chudleigh's 'glorious nothings' do not contain the specifically crude connotations of Donne's poem, the reference, whether conscious or not, signals the difficulty of transcending worldly terms in which women and body are so closely associated. It is through these tenuous shifts between speech and silence, the corporeal and non-corporeal, that Chudleigh's speaker enters the protected sanctuary of poetry.

33. However, this domain, which initially seemed to offer escape from orthodox modes of identification, is suddenly shattered by the death of the Duke, a figure who in many ways represents all the trappings of power and possession that the speaker apparently rejected at the outset.<sup>24</sup> His entry into heaven indeed highlights his regal inheritance and authority, marking his placement within a line of Stuart martyrs:

The *Caledonian* Chiefs were there,  
 Who thro' the World have spread their Fame,  
 And justly might immortal Trophies claim:  
 A long Descent of glorious Kings,  
 Who did, and suffer'd mighty things. (ll. 274-8)

Meanwhile, the speaker's muse flees and the speaker herself lies prostrate and 'pensive' 'Upon the Ground' (l. 233). The poem now embarks upon the explicitly public genre of occasional verse, in which:

My Country's Loss became my own,  
 And I was void of Comfort grown.  
 He's dead! he's dead! with them I cry'd,  
 And to each Sigh, each Groan reply'd. (ll. 235-8)

Barash suggests that at this point 'Britannia's voice collapses for a time onto the speaker herself' (242). Indeed, the location of the speaker's voice becomes increasingly difficult to identify from the announcement of the Duke's death. She begins by positioning herself in the shadows of a long male tradition of elegiac verse, from 'Maro', Virgil (l. 119), to the 'British Genius', Dryden (l. 108). The voice of her muse introduced through the retirement mode in the opening is apparently drowned out by the 'Lamentations loud' of the former poet laureate (l. 113). In a neat reversal of 'The doleful lay of Clorinda', now generally treated as an elegy by Mary Sidney wrapped within Spenser's *Astrophel* (Spenser, *Astrophel* 549-50), the next nine stanzas of this poem present the speaker's eulogy as enshrouded in Dryden's.

34. Ushered into heaven by the stately pomp of St George (ll. 260-1), the embrace of his noble ancestors and his coronation amid 'th' Aethereal Court' (ll. 325-7), the Duke's joyful entry into 'a Life Divine' (l. 267) seems to pave the way towards poetic and national resolution. Dryden's proclamations on the event come to an end (l. 328), '*Britannia* now no longer mourn'd' (l. 329), the muse returns to wipe away the speaker's tears and the pastoral scene reappears, though now within the context of national regeneration and *Britannia*'s rejoicing (l. 342), rather than poetic solitude.
35. However, as Messenger argues, the poem ultimately refuses to comply with the neat patterns of the conventional pastoral elegy, for the speaker remains unconsolated at the end of the poem so

that 'the whole tradition' Chudleigh 'has been working with comes apart' (*Pastoral* 94). But where Messenger suggests that this shift from convention does not appear until the final two stanzas, I consider the poem to be in many ways unorthodox from its outset. Framed by the retirement mode, the poem undergoes a series of transformations and reversals both in form and speaking positions, which are signalled by the appearance of the mutating figure of Philomela. The ecstatic retreat from the 'Vain World' (l. 60) into the harmonious poetic realm of the opening is exchanged for a retreat into grief: now the speaker is out of kilter with the poetic and social values of the world she inhabits and is unable to restore her former state when she was 'as if in *Lethe's Stream*' (l. 77). Her promises of fidelity to her muse turn into non-compliance in the last stanza. The strange, rapturous state produced by hearing the mythological Philomela's song of woe, which yields the speaker's poetic voice, is replaced by her identification with the Queen's maternal grief and loss, for it is 'Her Tears' that 'forbid me to rejoice' (l. 367), and for which poetry provides no relief. The transportation of the soul from her body mutates into the tangible suffering caused by the loss of a child, the fruits of the female body, which, while indicating anxieties about a royal heir, also creates a bond between the speaker and Queen as women.<sup>25</sup> Her own 'Sighs' match the Queen's 'Sighs' and it is these which 'arrest my Voice' (ll. 359, 370): sorrow converts into song and song into sorrow and silence.

36. And yet what follows is not silence, but an entire volume of poetry dedicated 'To the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty', 'laid at your Royal Feet', and we learn in the Preface that poetry 'restor'd my Mind to its former Tranquillity' (44). In this poem, then, the relationship between verse, voice and body is peculiarly complex. The retirement motif recasts orthodox modes of identification, elicits a variety of feminine personae and, far from signalling a retreat into privacy, provides the starting point for public address and exchange between women. Retreat is once more employed as a means of formulating a feminine poetic identity in which the body is displaced by a sensualised lyric voice. But it is also a means of reframing the speaker's relationship to the world outside. By reworking the standard tropes of the retirement mode, Chudleigh creates an explicitly feminised poetics in which, unlike the professed aim of much of the poetry written by men in the same genre, the apparently enclosed space of retreat elicits entry into rather than withdrawal from the public domain.<sup>26</sup>

#### IV

37. The process of bodily renunciation, recuperation and redefinition implicit in Chudleigh's verse finds expression in a different form in Jane Barker's verse. Here again retreat is directly linked with the emergence of a specifically feminine poetic voice through the figure of Galesia.<sup>27</sup> In her fictional work, *Loves Intrigues* (1713), it is within the context of rural retirement on one of Galesia's 'solitary walks' (Barker 13) that 'these Shades strange Thoughts suggest', for here the muses first advise her to stray from the conventional path of love, to 'cast off thy Chain,/ Which links thee to thy faithless Swain', and instead, 'to take Wing' 'Till thou reach fair Orinda's Height' 'And vow a Virgin to remain' (14, ll. 1, 13-14, 6, 8, 15).<sup>28</sup> Not until the sequel to Galesia's story, *A Patch-Work Screen for the Ladies* (1723), does she commit herself to such pursuits by passing 'my Time in my shady Walks, Fields, and Rural Affairs. The Pleasure of which was greatly improv'd by reading Mrs Phillips', whose poetry she emulates, especially that 'in Praise of a Country-Life, and Contempt of human Greatness' (Barker 76).<sup>29</sup> However, when circumstances force her to live in London, in which 'Quiet and Retreat' are 'scarce anywhere', Galesia constructs an alternative site of withdrawal, consisting of 'a Closet in my Landlady's Back Garret which I crept into, as if it had been a Cave on the Top of Parnassus ... Here I thought I found my own poor despicable Muse given to Orinda as her Waiting-Maid ... this Hole was to me a kind of Paradise' (Barker 122). It is here 'My impertinent Muse ... found me; and here we renew'd our old Acquaintance' (123). Retirement is thus adapted to an urban setting. But in each instance, retreat comprises the same values for Barker of poetic endeavour, medical study and the merits of single life.

38. Spencer beautifully argues how in Barker's work writing poetry is indeed directly connected to the closed body of the virgin and the rejection of married life ('Creating' 165-81), while King suggests that '[t]he retirement poem takes on startling implications' in Barker's verse 'when it is recognized that the withdrawal from distraction and empty business it valorizes is at base a refusal ... of the whole business of heterosexual obligation' ('Magdalen' 22). In 'The Necessity of Fate' (Barker 141-3), for example, such 'Fruits of worldly Treasure' (l. 37) are abandoned in favour of entry into a different kind of union, signalled through 'Initiation/ Into the Muses Congregation' (ll. 32-3).
39. In Barker's most anthologised poem, 'A Virgin Life' (Barker 139-40), this 'happy State' enables the speaker to produce 'chaste Verse' conceived from 'my chaster Thoughts' (ll. 5-6) and, in the process, as King suggests, 'transforms the meaning and value of unmarried life' ('Jane Barker' 561). The speaker challenges 'What mad Conceptions some have had of Thee' (l. 20), thereby implying that 'virgin' is not an innocent term, but one to which meanings are attached that can be unfixed and rethought.<sup>30</sup> For the speaker, 'A Virgin bears the Impress of all Good/ Under that Name, all Vertue's understood' (ll. 27-8). In a witty pun that brings together the connotations of sexual penetration and publication, she argues that far from being a condition of 'Wretchedness,/ Or foul Deformity' (ll. 21-2), virtue is *imprinted* on the virgin. Moreover, this statement makes her both object and subject of the verb 'bears' so as to rework the trope of poetry as offspring, mentioned earlier: her progeny also bears the features of goodness that mark her body and define the essence of her state.
40. However, textual production is defined by the same level of ambivalence in Barker's poetry as in Finch's, Chudleigh's and Killigrew's. Like the speaker in Chudleigh's 'On the Death', Barker's Galesia presents her muse as a lover, but one with whom she conducts a fickle relationship and one who, following the conventions of male poetry, is specifically feminised, for 'Sometimes I wou'd repel her Insinuations; and sometimes again accept her Caresses' (Barker 123). 'To my Muse' (Barker 123-4) attempts to explain Galesia's inconsistency in terms that recreate the standard sexualised tropes with which they play.<sup>31</sup> The opening of the poem expresses anxieties about the quality of the produce such a union will yield when Galesia suggests that her muse's entry into 'The barren Region of my Breast' is an infestation that can only conceive 'Weeds of Noise' (ll. 1-4). The reason why 'I thy Sweets and Charms oppose' is that Galesia possesses 'a Mind so wholly rude,/ As can't afford to entertain/ Thee, with the Welcome of one Strain' (ll. 7, 12-14).
41. Later in the same poem, the speaker highlights her muse's generosity in offering insistent companionship in spite of her mistress's 'Coldness and Disdain': she offers patience against rejection, solace against disquiet, kindness against displeasure, she 'driv'st Grievs away' and 'fill'st their empty Places' by providing moral guidance and support (ll. 20-7). In this, the persistent advances of Galesia's muse seem more like the devotions of a selfless, Christian friend, celebrated in 'A Virgin Life', than those of a desirous lover. Moreover, her muse supplies her with fundamental life resources: she 'fortify'st' Galesia when she is 'in Distress' and provides 'Consolation, Physick, Food' (ll. 28-9). The speaker thus concludes by requesting her muse to 'Take full Possession of my Breast' whose fruit will be 'harmless Rhimes' (ll. 34, 31). Once again, Barker uses the retirement mode to reframe the relationship between textual and sexual production in which writing is the source of sensual pleasure, feminine creativity and internal nourishment.
42. In examining the verse of Finch, Killigrew, Chudleigh and Barker we have seen how the retirement mode is fundamental to the production of a feminine poetics during this period. The concept of retreat seems to contain particular resonance for women poets, enabling them to reformulate feminine subjectivity. While retirement appears to signal a closed or contained body, what frequently emerges is a site that enables the exploration of new possibilities, especially for forging a specifically feminine poetic identity. Within the site of withdrawal the terms constructed by the world outside are regarded from a different perspective where they

may be challenged and reshaped. In certain contexts retreat provides a womb-like space of poetic fruition; one which, in Finch's, Chudleigh's and Barker's work, elicits an active, inner life of writing, thought and creativity and one in which identities and their relation to their environment are rethought. Often the place of retirement is connected to the idea of bodily transcendence, where a feminine religious subject is freed from social constraints which define women primarily through the body, and where corporeal matter is associated with the corrupt world outside of its confines. On other occasions, the retreat is a location where the body is redefined. In Finch's, Chudleigh's and Barker's verse, for example, writing is associated with sensory pleasure and the poetic domain is eroticised. Indeed, frequently sharp boundaries are loosened within the apparently enclosed domain of retirement, so that confinement incorporates movement; stillness, transformation; containment, digression from fixed parameters. Moreover, though frequently marked as a self-enclosed space, retirement may embrace social exchange. Unlike male poets' use of the genre, in which retreat is usually employed as a chosen means of withdrawal from public life, in women's poetry it often provides the starting point for public address from a position of apparent privacy and isolation.

43. However, the protective haven that retirement often seems to offer is partially a theoretical site at the very least, haunted by the idea of 'retreating *from* something'. A sense of precariousness and tentativeness hovers over the shady grove, often through the implicit sense of exile contained there, which leaves it vulnerable to the forces of the world it rejects. The lengthy poem that introduces Chudleigh's volume of retirement verse pinpoints this very tenuousness, showing how the site of retreat may easily be shattered and transformed by external factors. But the retreat may also be troubled from within, through the mutation of the subject's own identity, as in Finch's poetry, or in Killigrew's, through the idea that a retreat can never truly be a retreat, but simply demands further withdrawal until the subject's identity is extinguished.
44. Women writers' deployment of the retirement mode is therefore varied, rich and ambivalent, often placing a different light on the genre from their male counterparts. While certain pivotal features begin to emerge in women's poetry of this period, they do not fall into a neat set of patterns and are often more complicated than they initially appear. In this, the standard conventions of the retreat genre – physical confinement and enclosure; withdrawal from the world and critique of orthodox social values – provide a means for women poets to construct new types of speaking positions through which the feminine may be rethought and the relationship between verse, voice and body reshaped.

## NOTES

1. The writers most commonly alluded to in women's poetry of the period are of course Katherine Philips and Aphra Behn. Finch, Killigrew and Barker all refer directly to the influence of Philips.
2. See, for example, Abraham Cowley's 'The Wish' (Cowley *Poems* 87-8), in which the retreat is associated with the classical virtues of moderation, tranquillity, friendship and study, together with the unwanton companionship of 'A Mistress' (ll. 14-16).
3. Andrew Marvell's 'The Garden' exemplifies this type of poem (Marvell 100-2). See also Katherine Philips's 'An ode upon retirement, made upon occasion of Mr Cowley's on that subject' (Philips 193-5), in which the 'quiet', 'coole retreat' sought by the speaker reflects self-discipline and self-sustenance (ll. 22, 27-8, 45-6).
4. Most recently this has been discussed by Lynette McGrath, who points out 'a worried awareness of the potentially threatening association of women's bodies with language' throughout the Renaissance, which 'is made manifest in the patriarchal linking of women's two mouths – of literary publication or eloquence with sexual promiscuity' (49). See also Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender* and Peter Stallybrass, 'Patriarchal territories'.

5. Jane Spencer discusses a range of bodily images associated with female poets during this period ('Imagining' 99-119).
6. Spencer identifies Philips as a 'model for emulation' precisely because she was 'understood in terms of chastity and apparent reluctance to publish'. Moreover, this image 'of the modest, retiring, virtuous poetess became so successful that it became a means to market women's poetry to subscribers and other buyers, in a discreet form of professionalization' ('Imagining' 105).
7. See Easton 6-9 and Price 231-3.
8. Implicitly modifying Ezell's and King's perspectives, McGrath convincingly argues that '[f]or early modern women to write at all is in itself to refuse the imposed patriarchal definition of the female body and begin to speak from another bodily space and an alternative sense of the self as subject' (69, see also 35-69). These negotiations are certainly apparent in my chosen poets.
9. Valerie Rumbold, for example, notes how Finch 'often projected muted themes of political dissent onto motifs of pastoral retreat, idealizing a circle of sympathetic acquaintance, and in particular the support and friendship of other women' (129), features that echo Philips's verse. Prescott points out how 'in many cases a provincial existence could actively enable a woman's literary career' (2), though notes that Finch in fact 'maintained connections' with London (33).
10. Importantly, however, Barash argues that by the time Finch's *Miscellany Poems* appeared in 1713, 'we find Finch remaking political tropes as emotional ones' (282), suggesting that in 'taking patterns that are often implicit in other women writers and generating a web of metaphors – solitude, inwardness, darkness' – she invented the poetic psyche of the eighteenth century (261). It is worth noting, however, that these metaphors are central to Lady Mary Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, which appeared nearly a century earlier.
11. Barash notes that in the earlier version of this poem 'the court of Mary and James remains an ideal' (278), whereas in this later one, the court is presented as being a transient domain, set against the 'certain station' of heaven (l. 18).
12. See Spencer for Cowley's treatment of this metaphor in his celebration of Philips and the standard image of female poetry as the conception of a monstrous birth ('Imagining' 102-4). Helen Wilcox also discusses how women writers rework metaphors of poetry as offspring and writer as mother (210-14).
13. This kind of self-critique is of course a convention of a diverse range women's writing throughout the seventeenth century. See, for example, poems as varied as Aemelia Lanyer's 'To the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty' (1611), stanzas 11-12 and An Collins's 'The Discourse' (1653), stanzas 1-4.
14. The Horatian tag comes from Horace's *Epistles* 1.19, ll. 21-22 (Horace 40). Ruth Salvaggio suggests that '[t]he very process of "wand'ring" and "wav'ring" is one that Finch directly associated with both her retreats into nature and the very notion of woman' (110), ones which, she argues, indicate her displacement within the dualistic system of meanings informing enlightenment culture (105-26). The notion of wandering is also specifically linked to the writing subject in 'The Appology' (Finch 15), where the speaker follows 'through the Groves a wand'ring Muse' (l. 3). Given the representation of the writing subject, it is perhaps ironic that 'The Spleen' was among Finch's most popular poems (see Rogers 17).
15. Claudia Thomas Kairoff identifies this poem's intricate political coding, where 'pro-Stuart sentiment is associated with freedom from "enslavement" to imported goods and the pursuit of wealth, associated popularly with the anti-Stuart Whig party' (186).
16. See Rogers for a detailed discussion about Finch's analysis of this condition (17-27).

17. See, for example, Richard Lovelace's royalist poem 'To Althea, from Prison' (Lovelace 78-9)

18. Killigrew's *Poems* were printed posthumously in 1686, but circulated earlier.

19. Prescott also observes how Chudleigh uses the concept of retreat as a means 'to explore her own position as a woman poet' and as a metaphor 'for intellectual and literary freedom' (53-4).

20. Citing Marjorie Nicolson's discussion about Descartes and Henry More, Hilda Smith suggests how Descartes's concept of reason, especially his commitment to withdrawal, appealed to seventeenth-century women writers in that his mode of analysis 'in isolation from the general intellectual debates of the day allowed him a sense of freedom and control he could obtain in no other way' (203). Furthermore, Catherine Gallagher argues that Cartesian dualism influenced '[m]any seventeenth-century women writers' through its implication that the mind was ungendered (34). However, Susan Bordo shows how the processes of 'separation and individuation' by which Cartesian rationalism is obtained are implicitly masculinised (249 and 247-64). It is also worth noting that numerous women philosophers of the period opposed Descartes's dualism, most notably Margaret Cavendish and Anne Conway.

21. Wisdom is also feminised in the same poem, though so, too, is Folly (Chudleigh 129, ll. 108 and 102).

22. See, for example, 'Friendship's Mysterys, to my dearest Lucasia' (Philips 90-1) and 'Friendship' (Philips 150-1). However, friendship usually enables this state in Philips's poetry and the focus is less on the procurement of rational thought than the union of souls.

23. Compare with Killigrew's 'Upon the Saying that my Verses were made by another' (Killigrew 44-7) in which the speaker's 'Undivided Sacrifice' of 'Soul and Body' to her muse elicits 'pleasing Raptures' that 'fill'd my Ravisht Sense' (ll. 9-10, 17). However, where in Chudleigh's verse poetic production is presented as a private act, in Killigrew's poem the speaker, having claimed to relinquish all worldly values in exchange for 'thy Poetique Fire' (l. 4), is seduced by the 'False Hope' of 'Fame', so that 'By thee deceiv'd, methought, each Verdant Tree,/ Apollos transform'd *Daphne* seem'd to be;/ And ev'ry fresher Branch, and ev'ry Bow/ Appear'd as Garlands to empale my Brow' (ll. 19, 18, 21-4). This image of corporeal imprinting leads her to allow her verse to be 'Rifl'd' 'By some few hands' (ll. 37, 32) and results in the ultimate humiliation of having her poems admired, but thought to be plagiarised. Unlike Philomela's elusive, modest nightingale, Killigrew's speaker is transformed by public repute into 'Esops Painted Jay' (l. 35), a noisy, ostentatious, predatory bird which imitates others.

24. As Ezell points out, the Duke of Gloucester, William Henry, was 'Queen Anne's only child to survive infancy' ('Introduction' 47), dying in 1700, aged 11. While many critics, including Barash, associate Chudleigh with Tory tendencies, Olive focuses on her Puritan background, reading this poem as a thinly disguised argument for political toleration. The retirement motif of the opening, she suggests, refers to 'the memory of past wrongs' and looks towards 'reconciliation beyond political division and party', while the poem as a whole 'uses the princess's immediate loss as a trope for political sympathy with Anne as hope for England's Protestant future' (484 and 487).

25. Chudleigh lost four of her own six children (Ezell 'Introduction' xxi).

26. Prescott identifies Chudleigh's 'complex' and gendered 'use of the Horatian mode and conventions of amateurism' as 'enabling subsequent women poets' self-representation in print' (56).

27. The poems to which I refer are revised versions of verses from *Poetical Recreations* (1688) which were subsequently incorporated into Barker's prose works. King indicates that this collection of poems was on sale by 1687, even though 'the title-page bears the date 1688' (*Jane Barker* 31).

28. Shiner Wilson points out that the very name 'Galesia' 'recalls the female form of the Latin name "Galaesus", a son of Apollo, god of poetry' ('Introduction' xxxvii). This unnamed poem is a revised version of 'The Contract with the Muses', which is part of 'The Lovers Elesium', and continues with a warning against such a fate by 'my uncouth guardian' (l. 20). In *Love Intrigues* the second part of the poem appears separately (Barker 25-6). This fictional work establishes the idea of retreat from its outset: it is narrated in St Germaine's Garden, the domain of the exiled James II and Mary of Modena, with whose interests Galesia firmly identifies herself before embarking on her tale of unhappy love. Barker herself was a committed royalist and catholic convert, following the Stuarts to St Germain-en-Laye, along with many other Jacobites, in the 1690s (Shiner Wilson, 'Introduction' xxv).

29. King convincingly shows how Philips's influence on Barker extends beyond 'the *idea* of Orinda' to the intricacies of formal features and themes (*Jane Barker* 45-7).

30. King indicates that Barker revised the lines preceding this statement, in which the speaker outlines some of these 'mad conceptions', at least twice to suit the particular prejudices of the moment (*Jane Barker* 220-2). Barker also cut eight lines from the 1723 version of the poem. Originally, she expands upon what is summarised in the final couplet to identify the tasks that demonstrate the virgin's commitments to Christian duty, community and social affairs.

31. This poem is a slightly revised version of 'To the Importunate Address of Poetry'.

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Responses to this piece intended for the Readers' Forum may be sent to the Editor at [M.Steggle@shu.ac.uk](mailto:M.Steggle@shu.ac.uk).

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