

Female Perspectives

“A Married State” (ca. 1646)

By Katherine Philips

- A married state affords but little ease
The best of husbands are so hard to please.
This in wives' careful faces you may spell
Though they dissemble their misfortunes well.
- (5) A virgin state is crowned with much content;
It's always happy as it's innocent.
No blustering husbands to create your fears;
No pangs of childbirth to extort your tears;
No children's cries for to offend your ears;
- (10) Few Worldly crosses to distract your prayers:
Thus are you freed from all the cares that do
Attend on matrimony and a husband too.
Therefore Madam, be advised by me
Turn, turn apostate to love's levity,
- (15) Suppress wilde nature if she dare rebel.
There's no such things a leading apes in hell.

“On the Death of my First and Dearest Child, Hector Philips, born the 23rd of April, and died the 2nd of May 1655.” (1655)

By Katherine Philips

- Twice forty months in wedlock I did stay,
Then had my vows crowned with a lovely boy.
And yet in forty days he dropped away;
O swift vicissitude of human joy!
- (5) I did but see him, and he disappeared,
I did but touch the rosebud, and it fell;
A sorrow unforeseen and scarcely feared,
So ill can mortals their afflictions spell.
- And now (sweet babe) what can my trembling heart
(10) Suggest to right my doleful fate or thee?
Tears are my muse, and sorrow all my art,
So piercing groans must be thy elegy.
- Thus whilst no eye is witness of my moan,
I grieve thy loss (ah, boy too dear to live!)
(15) And let the unconcerned world alone,
Who neither will, nor can refreshment give.

An offering too for thy sad tomb I have,
Too just a tribute to thy early hearse;
Receive these gasping numbers to thy grave,
(20) The last of thy unhappy mother's verse.