H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Patricia Phillippy. *Women, Death and Literature in Post-Reformation England.* New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. xi + 311 pp. $60.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-521-81489-8.

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Published on H-Women (January, 2004)

The Protestant Gendering of Mourning

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Patricia Phillippy's *Women, Death and Literature in Post-Reformation England* is an affirmation of the centrality of women's cultural work during the Reformation, and a study of the gendering of cultural work. A cultural historian and a scholar of early modern literature, Phillippy proves her oft-repeated thesis–that women's excessive mourning, negated because of its association with Catholicism and the corporeal, contrasts with the appropriately stoic and consolatory responses to death attributed to men–through an impressive investigation of women's many cultural roles surrounding the dying and the dead. She concludes that "reformers stigmatize women's mourning as feminine [...] to support a new formulation of men's internal grief; the stoic acceptance of death [...] which is the sign and certainty of election" (p. 16). Yet, Phillippy also posits that women writers reimagined immoderate mourning, in a strategy to authorize a wide range of texts.

The three essays in Part One, "Disposing of the Body," focus on men's representations of women's mourning, in connection with the physical "body of death." Phillippy's deft treatment of post-Reformation material culture invigorates her rich history of women's roles at the bedsides of the dying, and of women's funereal duties. As the primary attendants of the dying, women washed corpses, assisted surgeons in embalming, sewed shrouds, and shrouded corpses: a central tenet of Phillippy's analysis is that the physicality of women's roles contrasts with the otherworldly and consolatory focus of the male mourners and spiritual advisors. Women's excessive mourning, exemplified and amplified by women's physical connection to their children, suggests a lack of spiritual consolation.

Phillippy embeds her discussion of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* within a history of embalming that encompasses material practices and cultural uses, including metaphor. Women viewed embalming as a physically invasive and at least metaphorically sexual procedure. Embalming, when done by men, focused on the physical and material aspects of death, which were generally associated with women. By emphasizing metaphorical embalming (especially in sermons), men's embalming becomes spiritually restorative, as it could not be for

women. Although her own use of embalming (and later, of entombing) as a metaphor becomes somewhat distracting, Phillippy's careful explication of sermons and Protestant rejection of Catholic funerary practices are engaging and thoroughly convincing.

"Humility and Stoutness: The Lives and Deaths of Christian Women" examines published and popular deathbed scenes of women as mediated by male authors. In works of memorial created by their husbands, Katherine Stubbs and Katherine Brettergh are commended for the contradictory traits of humility and stoutness. Both Stubbs and Brettergh embody ideal and pious Protestant womanhood, which provides them moral positions from which to speak and, ultimately, to become spiritual guides for their husbands. The author constantly keeps in mind that these texts and women's voices are mediated and constructed by their male authors.

Phillippy further develops her discussion of the gendering of grief by examining excessive maternal grief in "London's Mourning Garment." Here, texts by men represent the inconsolable grief of mothers as threatening and destabilizing. Her analysis of a wide-ranging body of texts, including Muggins' *London's Mourning Garment*, force her to conclude that women's mourning was represented as unproductive while moderate masculine grief turns optimistically toward the fruitful, paternal reign of James I.

Part Two, "Sisters of Magdalene," explicates women's responses to and appropriations of the cultural representations of their grief and association with the physical bodies of the dead and dying. In effect, women's association with immoderate grief inspires texts including monuments, elegies, and *ars moriendi* which both express and embody their profound sorrow. Phillippy first examines the autobiographies of Anne Clifford, Alice Thorton, and Elizabeth Egerton to demonstrate that women's lives were largely shaped by their children's serious illnesses and deaths. These women struggle to accept the cultural norms of moderation, Phillippy explains, yet their excessive grief and refusal to be comforted authorizes their lachrymose autobiographical works as it creates space for them as subjects of those works. Women's grief in these autobiographies is contrasted with paternal grief which, although just as profound, is performed differently. Phillippy looks at Philippe de Mornay's *Tears for the Death of His Sonne*, in which he implicates himself and his wife in immoderate grief only to overcome it himself through prayer. In this way he becomes a model of appropriate mourning for his wife and his readers.

Phillippy returns to works by women as she analyzes mothers's desires for death and self-immolation after their children's deaths. Poems by Anne de Vere, Mary Carey, and Katherine Philips indicate that mothers's grief is central to their subjectivity, and Phillippy posits that the poems, as monuments to and embodiments of their deceased children, are authorized by maternal grief. Early modern women writers assert their right to excessive mourning and insist on it as an empowering justification for actions that are otherwise considered indecorous.

Phillippy's materialist approach is best demonstrated by her chapter on Lady Elizabeth Russell's works of memorial which "fashion her public performance as devoted wife, chaste widow, grieving mother, and capable matriarch" (p. 142). Her grief over her two husbands and her children stirs her to design family tombs, commission funerary monuments, write epitaphs, and choreograph heraldic funerals. She embraces the traditional role of maternal mourner and, Phillippy concludes, "manipulates culturally sanctioned forms of public mourning toward performances of her impressive and memorable presence" (p. 209).

In her final chapter, Phillippy examines female-authored *ars moriendi* by Rachel Speght and Alice Sutcliffe. Both texts present gender as constructed as a result of the Fall. Speght and Sutcliffe portray Eve as the origin of death but also of knowledge and of resurrection through women's maternity. This places women in a privileged role to speak and write of death and mourning.

Patricia Phillippy positions her volume on women's multiple roles in deathbed scenes and grieving as a correction to two psychoanalytical works on melancholia: Juliana Schiesari's *The Gendering of Melancholia* and Lynn Enterline's *The Tears of Narcissus: Melancholia and Masculinity in Early Modern Writing*. Schiesari focuses on the privileging of male melancholia over female mourning, emphasizing "a transhistorical oppression of women's loss [...] that exceeds any neo-historicist insistence on the particularity of a single historical moment" (p. 17), while Enterline's text analyzes the connections between narcissistic self-absorption and melancholy. Schiesari's and Enterline's focus on melancholia and Phillippy's emphasis on mourning indicate a central methodological difference: the former are both psychoanalytical analyses centered primarily on canonical works while Phillippy's strongly materialist study examines women's roles as they and others are dying, dur-

ing embalming and treatment of the corpses, and during private and public rituals of mourning. Phillippy examines both canonical and noncanonical literary works. While psychoanalysis itself generally privileges moderate mourning, Phillippy's historical study interrogates the origins of moderate grief as a post-Reformation value.

The significance of Phillippy's book, however, goes beyond her extensive discussion of death, dying, and grieving, to her methodology and her sensitive exploration of the significance of the Reformation to her topic: in effect, her historicizing. She excavates valuable and wide-ranging documents on women's involvement in death and dying, and carefully distinguishes between women's self-representations and other cultural constructions. Moreover, she maintains a carefully nuanced understanding of public and private roles often oversimplified in studies of early modern women's lives and works. This work is important for scholars and graduate students working in early modern history and literature, but it will be of particular interest to those studying early modern women or the history of affect. Despite some distracting repetition of her central tenets, Phillippy offers a valuable model for historicizing affect and provides an important service for literary critics and historians of the early modern period through her extensive archival research.

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Citation: Marlo M. Belschner. Review of Phillippy, Patricia, *Women, Death and Literature in Post-Reformation England.* H-Women, H-Net Reviews. January, 2004.

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