

*English & Italian Women Writers*



*Liber Antiquus*

*March 2016*

## *Behn's Only Original Volume of Verse*

### **1. Behn, Aphra (1640-89)**

Poems upon Several Occasions with a Voyage to the Island of Love. By Mrs. A. Behn.

London: Printed by R. Tonson and J. Tonson, at Gray's- Inn-Gate next Gray's-Inn Lane, and at the Judges-Head at Chancery Lane end near Fleetstreet. 1684

\$18,000

Octavo: 17.6 x 11.5 cm. A8, (b)8, B-K8, L1; B-I8 (L1 bound last)

FIRST EDITION of Aphra Behn's first published collection of poems and the sole 17th century publication devoted exclusively to her poetry (a number of Behn's poems appeared alongside those of her contemporaries in various miscellanies.) This is the sole edition; the 1697 "edition" cited in Wing is in fact a re-issue of the remaining sheets of the 1684 edition with a cancel title page (see Case 184B and O'Donnell 18.1b). In her bibliography, O'Donnell mentions an engraved portrait of the poetess known in only eight extant copies (although it should be noted that one in the Huntington copy has been "supplied.") The last copy with a portrait to appear on the market or at auction was in William Salloch's catalogue 388 in 1983.

A fine, tall copy, bound in contemporary 17th century speckled calf, with expert cosmetic repairs to the spine and corners. The text is in excellent condition. Provenance: bookplate of John Wallop, First Earl of Portsmouth and First Viscount Lymington. With nine prefatory poems in praise of Behn and her writings, including one by Thomas Creech and an anonymous poem sometimes attributed to Dryden.

Aphra Behn, best known for her contributions to Restoration drama, was the first *professional* woman writer to produce a substantial body of work in English. "In her own period Behn was held to be a considerable author, famous as a playwright, propagandist poet and panegyrist, novelist, and translator (Janet Todd, ODNB)

"Through her literary life she was writing verses, though these were published in her own volumes primarily in the mid 1680s when she clearly needed money from projects outside the theatre. The most important collection of her poetry is the volume entitled 'Poems upon Several Occasions with a Voyage to the Island of Love' (London: Tonson, 1684)... All the poems are either the work of Behn herself or poems that she has translated... Her main mode is the courtly pastoral lyric in its baroque Restoration form, written by women such as Katherine Philips and men such as Sir Charles Sedley and John Sheffield, who describes it in his 'Essay on Poetry' (1682) as a song with 'expression easy, and the fancy high', formally perfect and informal in style... Frequently she catches the air of spontaneity of the best informal occasional verse, its blend of feeling and detachment. Some of Behn's verses seem to have been primarily for coterie circulation, such as 'Our Cabal'; some may have been part of literary games and competitions, such as 'The Disappointment' or 'Rebellion's Antidote'; some may have been written to pay or create a literary debt like the poems to Thomas Creech and Edward Howard. Others were aimed at commercial publication, such as the paraphrases of Ovid, Aesop, Cowley and Tallemant."(Todd, "The Secret Life of Aphra Behn", pp. xxxix-xl)

O'Donnell "Aphra Behn, an Annotated Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Sources" A18.1a; Wing B1757; Term Catalog 2, 73 (Easter 1684) Case "A Bibliography of English Poetical Miscellanies" 1521-1750), 184b

TRE CANZONI  
DE LA S. ISABELLA  
CERVONI  
DA COLLE  
IN LAVDE DE' CHRISTIANISS.  
RE, E REGINA DI FRANCIA  
E DI NAVARRA,  
ENRICO Quarto, e Madama MARIA  
de' Medici.



IN FIORENZA,  
Appresso Giorgio Marescotti  
M D C.  
*Con Licenza de' Superiori.*

*Three Extremely Rare Poems by Isabella Cervoni*

**2. Cervoni, Isabella (ca. 1576- after 1600)**

Tre canzoni de la s. Isabella Cervoni da Colle in laude de' christianiss. re, e regina di Francia e di Navarra, Enrico quarto, e madama Maria de' Medici.

Florence: Giorgio Marescotti, 1600

\$5,500

Quarto: 20.7 x 14.5 cm. [32] pp. A-D4 (lacking blank D4)

SOLE EDITION. Bound in modern *cartoncino*. With Henry IV's coat-of-arms on the title page. Light waterstains throughout the volume, some foxing, but a good copy of a very rare book.

This is the sole edition of these three *canzoni* by the Italian poet Isabella Cervoni. This book is exceptionally rare. I have located only 7 copies outside of Italy: Yale, Folger, Chicago, Harvard, Michigan State; BN Paris, Mazarine Paris.

Isabella Cervoni of Colle Val d'Elsa, near Siena, was the daughter of the Medicean poet Giovanni Cervoni (fl. 1574-1607). A precocious youth, Isabella sent her earliest known poem, written at the age of 12 or 13, to the Grand Duchess Christine of Lorraine in 1590. She was later admitted to the Accademia degli Affidati at Pavia. Virginia Cox has suggested that Cervoni's development as a writer might have been influenced by the "local and well-remembered" Alessandra Scala (1476-1506), a prominent intellectual and writer, also from Colle. Cervoni wrote verse for various members of the Medici court in Florence, including the aforementioned French princess Christine of Lorraine, and in this volume, Christine's niece by marriage, Maria de' Medici and her husband, Henri IV of France.

"Cervoni's *canzone* to Maria de' Medici is particularly interesting for the explicitness of the pro-feminist conclusions it draws from its subject's excellence. By the time she composed this *canzone*, which was published along with two others, one to Henri and one jointly to the couple, the 24-year-old Cervoni was already a veteran Medici encomiast, having begun her career with a *canzone* on the birth of Cosimo II de' Medici in 1590. In her *canzone* to Maria, Cervoni draws liberally on the tradition of the *querelle des femmes*, comparing her subject to Minerva and Cornelia for her learning, to Zenobia in her governmental skills, and to Lucretia in her chastity. Especially interesting are two stanzas praising women's political contribution, and specifically the role of ruler-consorts in counseling their husbands, citing examples from Augustus' wife Livia to Pompey's Cornelia and Trajan's Plotina, and concluding with an admonition against 'false judgment' (*giudizio fallace*) that prompts men to rate women's intelligence as lesser than their own. Cervoni strengthens her argument on an *ad hominem* level by citing several exempla of Christian consorts who guided their pagan husbands to the true faith, suggesting an implicit parallel with Maria's potential role in increasing her formerly Protestant husband's adherence to Catholicism." (Virginia Cox, *The Prodigious Muse: Women's Writing in Counter-Reformation Italy*)

Edit 16, CNCE10930; Guarducci, *Annali dei Marescotti*, no. 354



*The Earliest Surviving Female-authored Comedy in Italy  
With a Full-page Engraving of a Theatrical Performance*

**3. Costa, Margherita (1600-1664)**

Li buffoni comedia ridicola di Margherita Costa romana a Berardino Ricci cavaliere del piacere detto il tedesco. In

Florence: Nella stamp. nuova d'Amador Massi e Lor. Landi, 1641

\$18,000

Quarto: 21.6 x 15.6 cm. 177 [i.e. 173], [3] p. Collation: A-K8, L8 (lacking final blank L8).

FIRST EDITION. Bound in contemporary vellum with a gilt label on the spine. A very nice copy of this very rare book. There is a repaired tear to the engraving with no loss. Complete with the full-page engraving by Stefano della Bella (1610–1664) of the comedy being performed.

Written by the actress-singer Margherita Costa, “Li Buffoni” is the earliest surviving comedy authored by a woman in Italy. The stage set, depicted in a fine full-page engraving, resembles a city street, with various figures dancing around two people in cages center stage. Fifteen seated spectators are shown watching the performance.

The book is extremely rare. There are only 4 copies in the U.S.: Vassar, Yale, Folger, Met. Museum. Italian SBN locates only 7 copies (two of which are defective) in Italy. I have located a mere 9 copies in the rest of Europe: 3 in France, 3 in England, 3 in Germany.

“Margherita Costa’s 1641 ‘Li buffoni’ (The Buffoons) is an ‘irregular’ comedy written by a no-less ‘irregular’ dramatist. Resourceful, ambitious and, to use her own term, audaciously bizarre, Costa produced experimental texts with a theatrical flair that matched the Baroque tastes of her day. She published an eclectic body of literature ranging from dramatic, historical, and devotional works, to amorous, occasional, and satirical poetry...

“Dedicated to the famed buffoon Bernardino Ricci and to an implicit Medicean readership, Costa’s work takes pride of place as being the first (surviving) female-authored comedy in Italy. While no direct testimony has come down to us attesting to how, when, where, or even if ‘Li buffoni’ was ever staged, the play’s frontispiece, prologue, and dedicatory letter offer tantalizing clues to its original spectatorship and performance. ‘Li buffoni’ is populated by a cast of human oddities – a non-professional troupe of *pazzi*, *buffoni*, and *nani* drawn from the Medici court and household staff. These ‘laughable’ types are engaged in bizarre yet paradoxically verisimilar roles, offering a satirical look at the mercenary culture in which Costa and her fellow entertainers eked out an existence. The grotesque figures that inhabit Costa’s *comedia ridicola* echo self-referential allusions found throughout her works, and dramatize her own authorial construction as a marginal character at the Medici court.”(Sara Diaz, “Marginal Authority in Margherita Costa’s ‘Li buffoni’”.)

“Set in the exotic kingdom of Morocco, ‘Li Buffoni’ is broadly structured around the unhappy marriage of prince Meo and his wife Marmotta, the sole and unwilling heir to the kingdom of Fessa. Their dynastic union is set off-kilter by a power imbalance between husband and wife, and pushed to the breaking point by Meo’s unabashed pursuit of the prostitute Ancroia. Their reconciliation hinges on the restoration of a male-line of succession and thus dramatizes, albeit in a comic light, the intimate relationship between sexual and political agency. Costa’s conjugal farce playfully stages, and satirizes, the highly unstable nature of patriarchal masculinity in early modern Italy.”(Sara Diaz, “Who Wears the Calzoni in the Family? Gendered Anxieties in Margherita Costa’s ‘Li buffoni’”.)

Clubb, L.G. Italian plays in the Folger Library, 319.



*The Life of Matilda of Tuscany  
With Transcriptions of the 11th c. Manuscripts of  
The Countess' Letters*

**4. [Matilda of Tuscany (1046-1115)] Fiorentini, Francesco Maria (1603-1673)**

Memorie di Matilda la gran contessa propugnacolo della chiesa con le particolari notizie della sua vita e con l'antica serie degli antenati da Francesco Maria Fiorentini restituita all'origine della patria lucchese. Memorie dell'origine di Matilda. Libro Terzo

Lucca: Appresso Pellegrino Bidelli, 1642

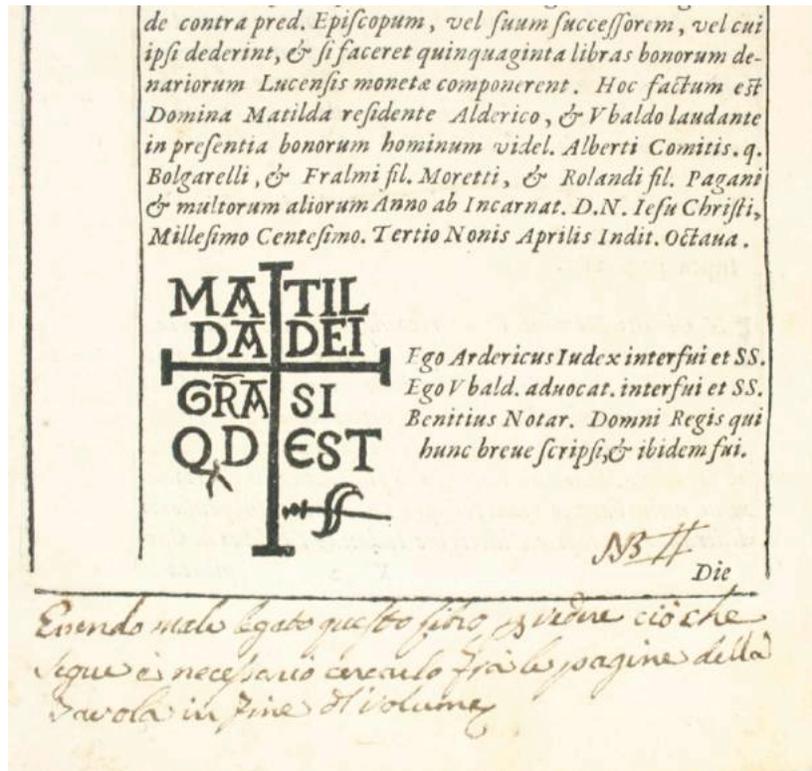
\$3,500

Quarto: 19.5 x 15 cm. \*4, A-Z4, Aa-Uu4, Xx6; A-V4, X6, Y-Z4. With an added etched title page.

FIRST EDITION. Bound in contemporary Italian vellum in fine condition with the original silk endbands nicely preserved. The text is also in fine condition, with only the occasional light marginal dampstain. A tiny wormtrail affects the lower part of the etched title only slightly. With the cancelled stamp ("duplicato") of the renowned Raccolta Trivulziana, Milan on the endpapers

and to the lower, blank margins of a few leaves. A lovely book.

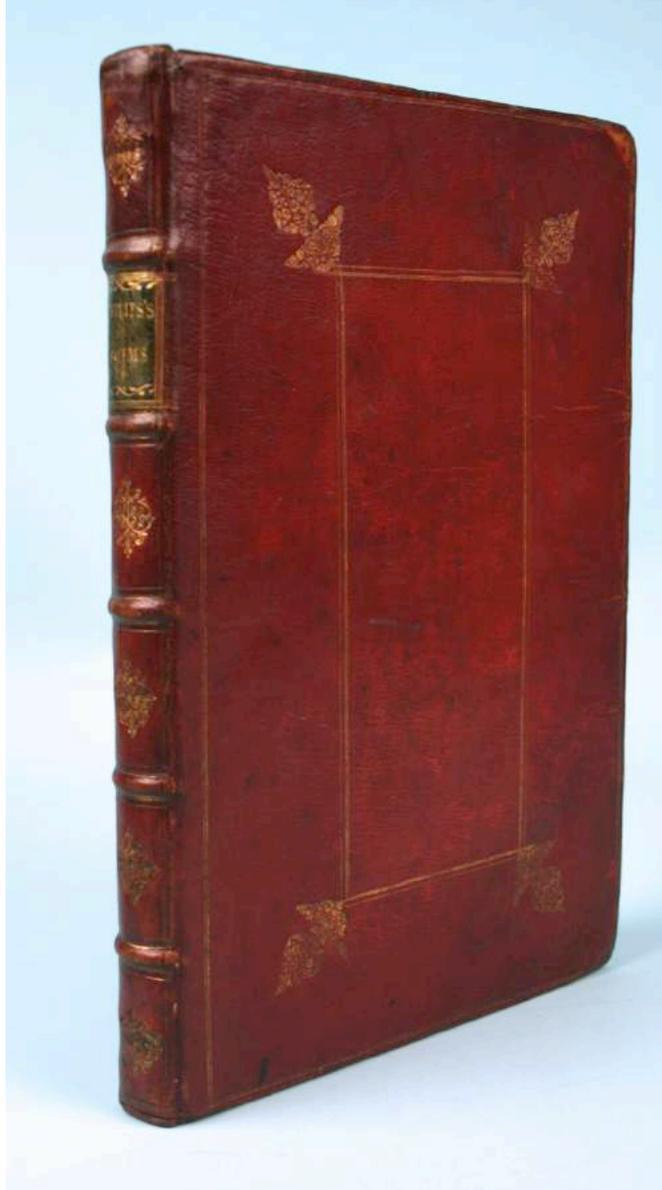
First edition of this rare life of the medieval Italian noblewoman Matilda of Tuscany (1046-1115), who won renown both for her diplomatic skills and her military achievements. Matilda was heiress to large territories in northern Italy and a powerful supporter of the popes against German imperial ambitions. Matilda was a crucial ally of Pope Gregory VII (d. 1085) during his war with the Emperor Henry IV (1050-1106), whose forces were defeated by Matilda's own at Sorbara (near Modena) in 1084.



An educated woman, fluent in French and German and able to read and dictate in Latin, Matilda was an intellectual and patron of letters who built a library and supervised an edition of Justinian's "Pandects". A justly famous –and controversial– figure in her own time, she is referred to –both positively and negatively– by contemporary writers, including Ekkerhard von Aura, who called her "the wealthiest, most famous woman of our times and most distinguished in virtues." Anselm of Canterbury sent Matilda his "Meditations". She died in 1115 and in the 17th century her body was removed to St. Peter's in Rome.

The author, Francesco Maria Fiorentini, was a physician, hagiographer, correspondent of Galileo, and himself a native of Lucca. The task of writing a life of Matilda was suggested by Marcantonio Franciotti, archbishop of Lucca, who granted Fiorentini access to the episcopal archive, rich in primary source documents of the 11th and 12th centuries.

Transcriptions of some of the most important contemporary documents occupy the final sixty-five pages of this book. These include letters and official pronouncements of Matilda herself, some of which are accompanied by a woodcut depiction of Matilda's famous cruciform signature.



*The First authorized Edition*

**5. Philips, Katherine (1631-1664)**

Poems By the most deservedly Admired Mrs. Katherine Philips The Matchless Orinda. To which is added Monsieur Corneille's Pompey & Horace,} Tragedies. With several other Translations out of French.

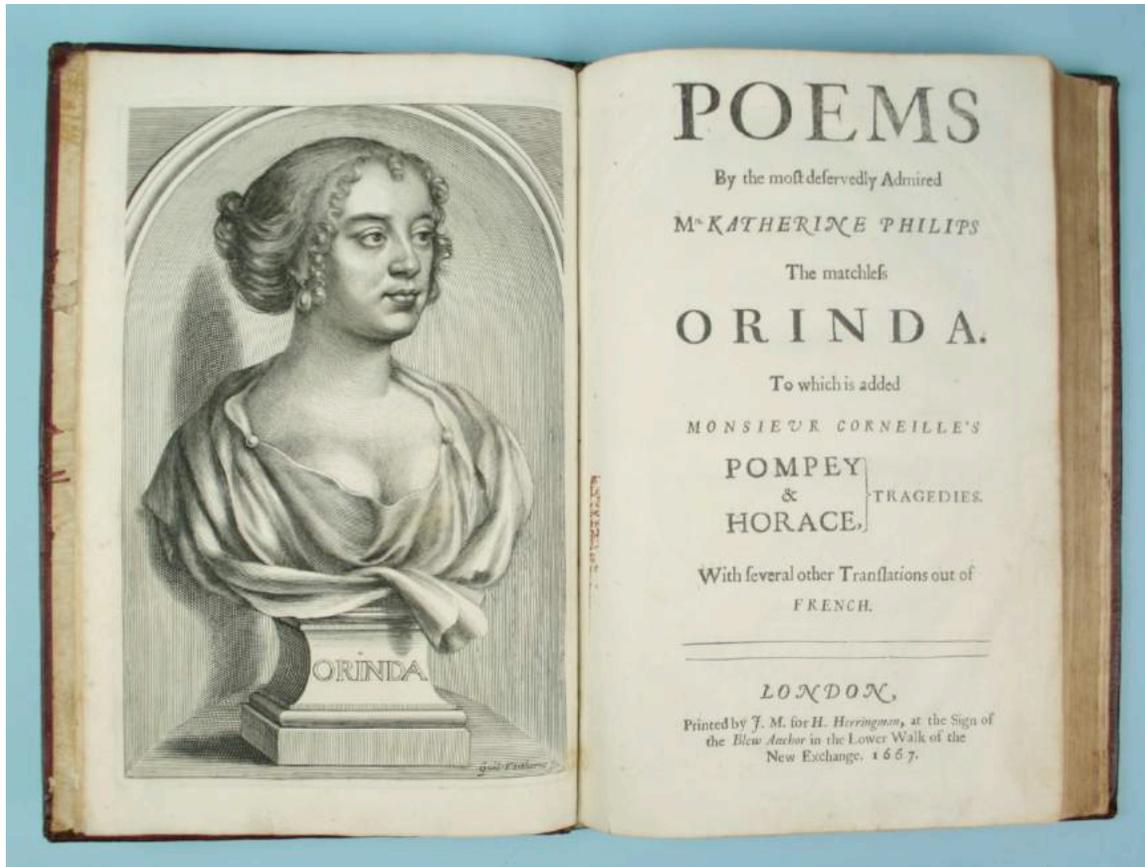
London: Printed by J. M. for H. Herringman, 1667

\$8,000

Folio: 27 x 19 cm.  $\pi$ 2, A2, a-g2, B-Z2, Aa-Zz2, Aaa-Zzz2, Aaaa-Mmmm2 (final blank leaf absent)

FIRST SANCTIONED EDITION, preceded by a pirated and suppressed edition of 1664. The portrait of Katherine Philips is bound opposite the title. This copy is bound in a lovely

contemporary red morocco binding, paneled in gold, with attractive gold tools at the corners. Green leather lettering piece to the spine. A nice copy, occasional toning to scattered leaves. Very nice. Provenance: Madam Anne Crene, contemporary signature, "Feb. 26, 6 8/9" and again "Madam Anne Crene her booke Oct. 21 1672".



“The daughter of a London merchant, Katherine Fowler [her maiden name] was probably the first English woman poet to have her work published. She married a gentleman of substance from Cardigan, James Philips, and seems to have moved effortlessly into the literary circle adorned by Vaughan, Cowley, and Jeremy Taylor. She was best known by her pseudonym ‘Orinda’ and the name appears on the collection of her Letters, which give a useful picture of the early 17th-century literary world. Her translation of Corneille’s ‘Pompee’ was performed in Dublin in 1663; a collection of her verses was published posthumously in 1664.” (Stapleton)

Mrs. Philips’ poems were circulated in manuscript, and secured for her a considerable reputation. The surreptitious quarto edition produced in 1664 caused her much annoyance, and Marriott, the publisher, was obliged to withdraw it from sale, and publicly to express his regret for having issued it. Some trouble was taken, it would appear, to destroy the copies, which would account for its rarity. In the preface of the 1667 edition, reference is made to the ‘false edition,’ and a long letter from the author in relation to it is quoted.

This is perhaps the most famous English collection of poems by a woman prior to 1700. P.W. Souers, in his critical biography of Katherine Philips, asserts for her the right to be historically the first English poetess—“In her, for the first time in the history of English letters, a woman was received into the select company of poets.” Jeremy Taylor dedicated to her his “Discourse on the Nature, Offices, and Measures of Friendship;” Abraham Cowley, Henry Vaughan the Silurist, Thomas Flatman, the Earl of Roscommon, and the Earl of Cork and Orrery all celebrated her talent, and Dryden could pay no higher compliment to Anne Killigrew than to compare her to

Orinda.

Wing P-2033; Hayward 116; Grolier 669; CBEL II, 480; Sweeney 3460

*The Rare, Unauthorized First Edition  
A Perfect Copy*

**6. Philips, Katherine (1631-1664)**

Poems. By the incomparable, Mrs. K.P.

London: Printed by J[ohn]. G[rismond]. for Rich. Marriott, at his shop under S. Dunstons Church in Fleet-street, 1664

\$15,000

Octavo: 16.6 x 11 cm. [16], 236, [4], 237-242 pp. A-P8, Q8, R4. Complete. With the imprimatur leaf A1, the errata leaf Q7, and blank Q8.

THE RARE UNAUTHORIZED FIRST EDITION. This was the only edition published in Philips' lifetime. Philips' died of smallpox in June 1664, five months after the appearance of this publication. The first authorized edition did not appear until 1667. Bound in contemporary English calf, very discreetly rebaked. The contents are in excellent condition. Complete copies are extremely rare. This copy has not only the imprimatur and errata leaves, but also the blank leaf Q8. Provenance: Frederick Spiegelberg, bookplate.

“In 1664 an unauthorized edition of Philips's *Poems* was published; the bookseller Richard Marriott had entered the volume in the Stationers' register in November 1663 and advertised it for sale in January. Philips, claiming she 'never writ any line in my life with an intention to have it printed', expressed her indignation in a number of letters, defending herself against any 'malicious' suggestion that she 'conniv'd at this ugly accident': 'I am so Innocent of this pitifull design of a Knave to get a Groat, yt I was never more vex'd at any thing, & yt I utterly disclaim whatever he hath so unhandsonly expos'd' (*Letters*, 128, 142). Some twentieth-century critics are sceptical of these conventional disclaimers: the 1664 edition is based on manuscripts that Philips herself circulated among friends (not at all 'abominably transcrib'd' and inauthentic, as she claims), and the text of the seventy-five poems it contains differs only slightly from that in the later, authorized edition of 1667. Yet her distress at seeing poems she considered private, circulated within a literary community of intimate friends, exposed to public gaze, goes beyond the conventional: 'Tis only I ... that cannot so much as think in private, that must have my imaginations rifled and exposed to play the Mountebanks, and dance upon the Ropes to entertain all the rabble' (*Ibid.* 129–30).” (Warren Chernaik, ODNB)

This is perhaps the most famous English collection of poems by a woman prior to 1700. P.W. Souers, in his critical biography of Katherine Philips, asserts for her the right to be historically the first English poetess—“In her, for the first time in the history of English letters, a woman was received into the select company of poets.” Jeremy Taylor dedicated to her his “Discourse on the Nature, Offices, and Measures of Friendship;” Abraham Cowley, Henry Vaughan the Silurist, Thomas Flatman, the Earl of Roscommon, and the Earl of Cork and Orrery all celebrated her talent, and Dryden could pay no higher compliment to Anne Killigrew than to compare her to Orinda.

Wing (CD-Rom, 1996), P2032



*The First Edition of Tullia d'Aragona's Poetry Including Her Love Poems*

**7. Tullia d'Aragona (c. 1510–1556)**

Rime della Signora Tullia di Aragona; et di diversi a lei.

Venice: Appresso Gabriel Giolito de Ferrari, 1547

\$7,500

Octavo: 15.5 x 10 cm. [80] p. A-E8

FIRST EDITION. A nice, clean copy in modern parchment with ties. Title page with small numeral 3 at the head. Giolito's woodcut device adorns the title page. Ornamental woodcut initials.

This collection is dedicated to the Spanish noblewoman Eleonora de Toledo, Duchess of Florence and wife of Cosimo I de' Medici.

In addition to forty-nine *rime* by Aragona, this volume also includes the long eclogue "La Tirrhenia", written for Aragona by her friend (and former lover) Girolamo Muzio; and a further fifty-five poems, written by men, many of which are responses to Tullia's own poems. In addition to her sonnets, "there are also seven heterogenous compositions, two madrigals, one song, and some *terzine*, *sestine*, and *ottave*, which testify to her range of technical skill." (Russell)

"As a courtesan, Tullia d'Aragona was an admittedly public woman, a sexual professional whose capital consisted in successfully manipulated display: spectacular appearances in processions and at banquets, a high intellectual style. Her reputation, on which she based the high fees that distinguished the courtesan from the common prostitute, depended on a male clientele, the Venetian and Florentine literati and courtiers with whom she traded sexual favors in return for literary recognition." (Miller)

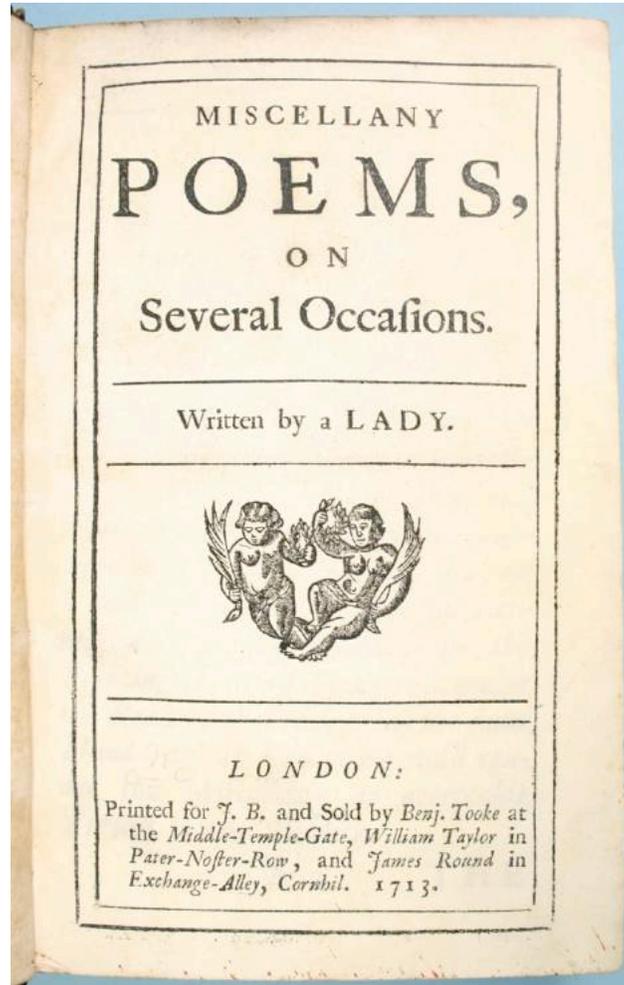
"The high percentage of epistolary and complimentary sonnets, and the order alternating those written by Tullia with the responses of her correspondents, create a net of reciprocating praise, at the center of which stands Aragona in her enhanced status and fame. Given the circumstances that led her to publish her work, her poems are unsurprisingly and impeccably correct. Their characteristic flavor derives from a persistent preoccupation with literary recognition and fame. In some sonnets she expresses satisfaction with her correspondent's proper praise of her and returns his compliment. In others, she disclaims all literary merit and asks her friend to immortalize her in his *carte*. In sonnet 38, Pietro Manelli is queried as to why he marvels at her wish to acquire fame by writing poetry, since she was created by God and nature in the same way he was. Two sonnets, addressed to Pietro Bembo and Bernardino Ochino, have no corresponding poem by the great men in question. Their inclusion was obviously calculated to bolster Aragona's literary legitimacy.

"Conspicuous is the opening set of thirteen sonnets, addressed to Duke Cosimo de' Medici and to his wife, Eleonora de Toledo, followed by two poems addressed to a religious lady of the Medici family, and by two others for Luigi and Pedro of Toledo, kin to the duchess Eleonora. In the sonnets to the reigning couple, she is openly thankful for the favor received. [Tullia had been denounced to the Florentine authorities as a courtesan; based on her status as a poet, the Duke granted her an exemption from the requirement that all courtesans wear a yellow veil, thus saving Tullia from public humiliation.] May it please Cosimo to soothe the anguish caused by her malevolent detractors, and may he allow her to remain in Florence and achieve fame by writing poetry.... Notwithstanding their profuse adulation, most of these celebratory sonnets are noteworthy for the skill with which the graceful compliments are tied into unerring logical structures that are sometimes openly and sometimes implicitly syllogistic.

"We have only ten love sonnets by Aragona. In them we find a few Platonic commonplaces: spiritual love is inspired by the virtues of the beloved and must be kept unsullied by sensual passion (sonnet 33); love is the soul's desire to enjoy beauty (sonnet 34); by means of love, the lover ascends to the contemplation of a higher beauty, of which the beloved is the reflection. The poet is at her best when she sings of love without philosophical trappings. In sonnet 32, she expresses gratitude for the love that Girolamo Muzio [her former lover and devoted friend] still feels for her and for his many kindnesses: 'Gentle Muzio, so kind a soul as yours/ is of sweet comfort to my heart... The honorable love that inflamed you for me/ on the banks of the River Po has lived for a long time, I do not think/ that such clear flame is totally extinguished.' Sonnet 42 is addressed to Manelli: if she is guilty, may she find no pity in him and may she cry forever, but if she is not guilty, may his coldness metamorphose into sweet love. Sonnet 43: A mother may want to be comforted for the loss of her child; a defeated captain may still hope to escape his captors; and a shipwrecked pilot may strive for a safe harbor; but if her love is lost, she neither hopes nor wants to be comforted. Sonnet 39: Once love had her in his thrall but then the flame subsided and she went freely singing. Now a hostile destiny has forced her back to her old ways and passion makes her cry for respite. The theme of short-lived freedom finds an elegant variation in sonnet 44, her most famous one, in which Tullia compares herself both to Philomela, fleeing from her cage into the trees and grass, and implicitly to a victorious amorous Amazon, when she retrieves

her trophies from the temple of the goddess of love.”(Russell)

Brunet I, 373: "assez rare"; Salvatore Bongi, "Annali di Gabriel Giolito de' Ferrari da Trino di Monferrato stampatore in Venezia." (Roma: 1890-95) p. 150 ff. (with a long essay on Aragona)



*The First Edition of Anne Finch's Poems*

**8. Winchilsea, Anne Kingsmill Finch, Countess of (1661-1720)**

Miscellany Poems, on Several Occasions. Written by a Lady.  
[with: "Aristomenes: or, the royal shepherd. A tragedy"]

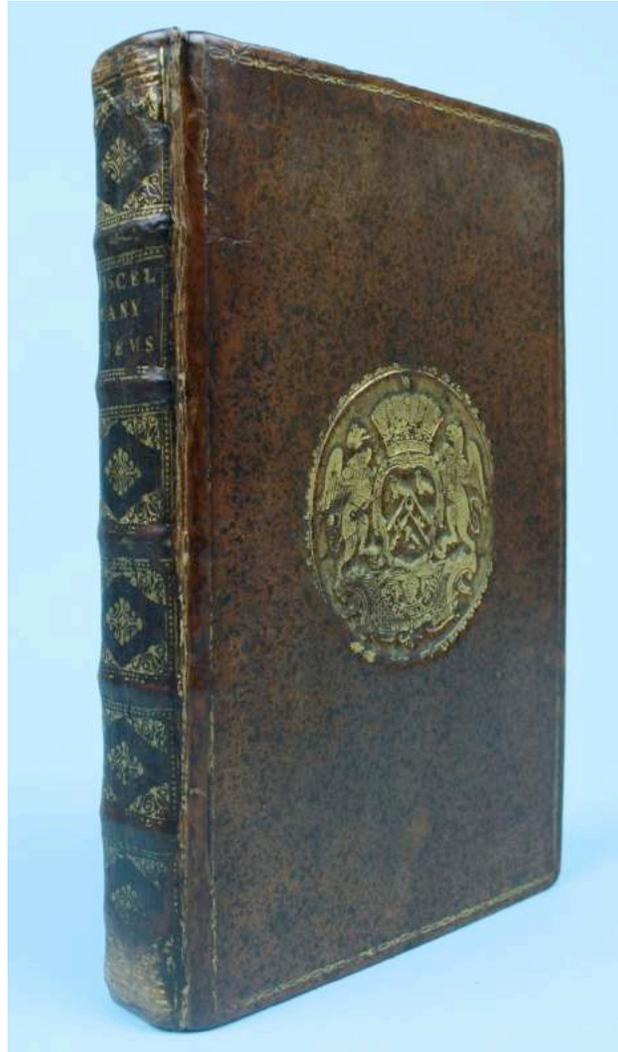
London: Printed for J.B. and sold by Benj. Tooke at the Middle-Temple-Gate, William Taylor in Pater-Noster-Row, and James Round in Exchange-Alley, Cornhil, 1713.

\$8,500

Large octavo: 19 x 12 cm. [8], 390 pp. A4, B-Z8, Aa-Bb8, Cc4  
(lacking the final blank) Leaves E8, G1 and G3 are cancels.

FIRST AND SOLE EDITION. A tall, crisp, fine copy, bound in contemporary eighteenth-century

English calf, the hinges mended, with the gilt armorial stamp of the Earls of Rockingham on both boards. The spine is ornately tooled in gold. With the bookplate of Lewis Watson, second Earl of Rockingham (d. 1745). The text is in excellent condition, bright and fresh. The title page is framed by a printed rule and bears a woodcut printer's device. "Aristomenes: or, the royal shepherd. A tragedy" is introduced by a half-title at leaf U4. This is Williams's 'A' issue, without the author's name on the title page and with J.B. in the imprint.



Anne Kingsmill Finch, Countess of Winchilsea, was one of the few women of her period to pursue a career as a poet, one of the earliest published women poets, and "one of the best English women poets before the nineteenth-century" (McGovern). This collection of Finch's work, consisting of eighty-six poems and her second tragedy, is the only collection of her poetry to be printed prior to the 20th century.

"In 1682 Anne Kingsmill became a maid of honour to Princess Mary of Modena, and, in the environment of the famed Restoration court wits, began secretly to write poetry, fearing, as she was later to acknowledge in the preface to the privately circulated manuscript of her poems, that she might be ridiculed as a 'Versifying Maid of Honour' (Finch, *Poems*, ed. Reynolds, 7–8). On 15 May 1684 she married Heneage Finch (1657–1726), second son of Heneage Finch, third earl of Winchilsea. Her husband, gentleman of the bedchamber to the future James II, then duke of York, was a courtier and soldier with a promising public career. She resigned her court position, but the couple resided in Westminster Palace and, through her husband, she maintained her close

ties with the court.

“After her marriage Anne Finch took up writing more seriously. In addition to a number of love lyrics to her husband, she wrote songs and religious verses, as well as a tragicomedy entitled ‘The Triumphs of Love and Innocence’. Her preoccupation with comedy and songwriting was cut short, however, by the revolution of 1688. With the flight of James II to France and the crowning of William and Mary early the following year, the couple's hopes for public life were ended. Remaining loyal to the Stuart cause, Heneage Finch and his wife fled London, and resided with various family members in the countryside. On 29 April 1690 Heneage was arrested while attempting to join James in France, and charged with Jacobitism. For the remainder of that year Anne Finch stayed in Kent at Godmersham, while her husband remained in London until the case was finally dismissed from the court of King’s Bench. During this period she wrote several poems of a political nature (for example, ‘The Change’, ‘Caesar and Brutus’, and her elegy ‘On the Lord Dundee’) or expressive of personal anguish (for example, ‘The Losse’, ‘On Affliction’, and ‘A Song on Greife’). She also wrote a tragic play, ‘Aristomenes, or, The Royal Shepherd’; this, she explains in the prose preface, was undertaken as a distraction, for otherwise ‘such dejection of mind, cou'd not have been supported’ (p. 12).

“Once reunited the couple settled in Kent at the Eastwell estate of Heneage's nephew Charles, who had succeeded Heneage's father as the fourth earl of Winchilsea, and for several years at nearby Wye College. Finch's marriage, which was childless, proved advantageous to her poetry; her husband, who served as a lifelong editor and transcriber of her poems, strongly encouraged her in her writing. ‘To Mr. F. now Earl of W’, for example, is addressed to Heneage, who, ‘going abroad, had desired Ardelia [Finch's poetic name for herself] to write some Verses upon whatever Subject she thought fit, against his Return in the Evening’. Her first publications (all appearing anonymously) were love lyrics, including two set to music: ‘Tis strange this heart’, set by R. Courteville and published in *Vinculum societatis* in 1691, and ‘Love, thou art best of human joys’, set by Henry Purcell and included in a popular collection of songs in 1694 (*Comes amoris, or, The Companion of Love*). Six of her religious poems were published in the *Miscellanea sacra* (1696).

“Finch's poems cover a wide variety of genres and subject matter. In addition to religious verse and love lyrics, she wrote fables, nature poems, verse plays, odes, songs, pastorals, and occasional poems to friends and relatives. Women play a prominent role in her poetry, from satirical poems (such as ‘The Unequal Fetters’ and ‘An Epilogue to the Tragedy of Jane Shore’) that deal with gender issues and the inequality of women in contemporary society, to numerous poems that celebrate women's intelligence and resourcefulness.

“Finch's best-known poem during her lifetime was ‘The Spleen’, published anonymously in 1701 in Charles Gildon's *New Miscellany of Original Poems*. This Pindaric ode examines the social and personal implications of spleen, or melancholy, a malady with which she was afflicted throughout her life and to which her poetry contains numerous references (from her early ‘Ardelia to Melancholy’ to ‘A Supplication for the Joys of Heaven’, written in her late fifties, just a couple of years before her death).

“In 1708, after two decades of rural retirement, the Finches returned to London. As active nonjurors and Jacobites they continued to be political outcasts and under the threat of government reprisals, but the return to London brought with it some beneficial literary relationships, as well as significant publications. In 1709 Delariviere Manley included two of Finch's poems in *The New Atlantis* and Jacob Tonson's prestigious *Poetical Miscellanies* published three of her pastoral poems (‘A Pastoral Dialogue between Two Shepherdesses’, ‘Adam Pos'd’, and ‘Alcidor’) bracketed between two poems by Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope's first publication, his ‘Pastorals’. Richard Steele hailed the miscellany as ‘a collection of the best pastorals that have hitherto appeared in England’ (*Tatler*, no. 10).

“With the death of his nephew Charles in 1712, Heneage Finch became fifth earl of Winchilsea and Anne became a countess. However, for the next eight years, until just a few months before her death, the Eastwell estate was involved in complex litigation and financial difficulties inherited

from the former earl. Moreover, because Heneage Finch continued to refuse to take the oaths of allegiance, he was denied his seat in the House of Lords. Thus, despite the return to a more public life and the evident advantages of involvement with some of the most prominent writers of the day, Finch and her husband continued to remain political and, to an extent, social outcasts.

“The year following her husband's accession to the peerage, *Miscellany Poems, on Several Occasions*, an anonymous collection containing eighty-six of Finch's poems and her play *Aristomenes*, was brought out by John Barber, also a Jacobite, and a friend of Swift. Subsequent title-pages that year identified the author as Lady Winchilsea. Various theories have been put forth to account for Finch's overcoming her earlier reluctance to publish: her new-found status as a countess (Messenger); the more favourable political climate that the brief tory return to power (1710–14) would have offered a known Jacobite sympathizer (Hinnant, ‘Anne Finch and Jacobitism’); and the encouragement and support of her new literary friends, especially Swift and Pope (McGovern, ‘Finch, Pope, and Swift’).

“Both Swift and Pope wrote poems praising Finch as a poet. Swift's ‘Apollo Outwitted’ humorously portrays her as inflicted with modesty by the lustful Apollo, whose advances she has rebuffed, and encourages her to overcome his curse and publish. And Pope, who counted the Finches among his friends and for whom Finch wrote three poems, addressed to her his ‘Impromptu, to Lady Winchilsea’ in which he heaps praises upon Ardelia as the greatest of all women poets. The sincerity of his high regard for her poetry is also evident in his having included eight of her poems in the *Miscellany Poems on Several Occasions* that he edited in 1717.

“Finch continued writing poetry until the time of her death at the age of fifty-nine. After months of deteriorating health she died on 5 August 1720, at her Cleveland Row home in London. She was buried, at her request, in the small church on the Eastwell estate, on 9 August. Lord Winchilsea survived her by six years.” (Barbara McGovern, DNB)

Foxon, F-140; Hayward 151; Rothschild 2585; Williams, *Points*, p. 72; Lowndes IV, 2949; Graesse VI, 460-61

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