

# Som en Sapfo

Publiceringsstrategier, självframställning och retorik  
hos tre tidigmoderna kvinnliga poeter

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# Abstract

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**Title:** *Som en Sappho. Publiceringsstrategier, självframställning och retorik hos tre tidigmoderna kvinnliga författare*

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In Early Modern Europe, it was self-evident that a poet was a man. But despite overwhelming theoretical proof that women could not be poets, some women were. This thesis explores how some women succeeded as writers, through the study of three poets who were all presented to their audiences as the Sappho of their time: French Louise Labé (ca 1520/1523–1566), English Katherine Philips (1632–1664), and Swedish Hedvig Charlotta Nordenflycht (1718–1763). What did it mean to be a new Sappho? Sappho, and the idea of the Early Modern woman poet as a ‘new’ Sappho, links Labé, Philips, and Nordenflycht to each other. Therefore, this study endeavours to follow the traces of Sappho through the centuries and through the works of Labé, Philips, and Nordenflycht. The thesis consists of six chapters. After an introductory chapter and a chapter discussing the Early Modern reception of Sappho, three chronologically ordered chapters analyse the three poets’ strategies of publication, their self-presentations and what rhetorical devices they employ to present female poetic speakers and to justify their writing. The sixth and final chapter brings Labé, Philips and Nordenflycht together, comparing and contrasting their works and lives. Taking its cue from Judith Butler’s call to “take up the tools where they lie”, the thesis argues that the poets became successful because they learned to capitalize on the opportunities that their specific contexts offered, and to both master and vary the aesthetic codes available to them in ways that their readers appreciated. Drawing on Susan Lanser’s term *sapphic subject*, the discussion develops the role played by Sappho in the three poets’ works, to further contend that Labé, Philips, and Nordenflycht created real or fictional female communities which enabled them to move away from the traditionally silent role played by women in Early Modern literature, and to underscore that they were not exceptional but rather that women were as capable poets as men.

**Keywords:** Louise Labé, Katherine Philips, Hedvig Charlotta Nordenflycht, a ‘new’ Sappho, Early Modern women poets, rhetorical space, poetic persona