

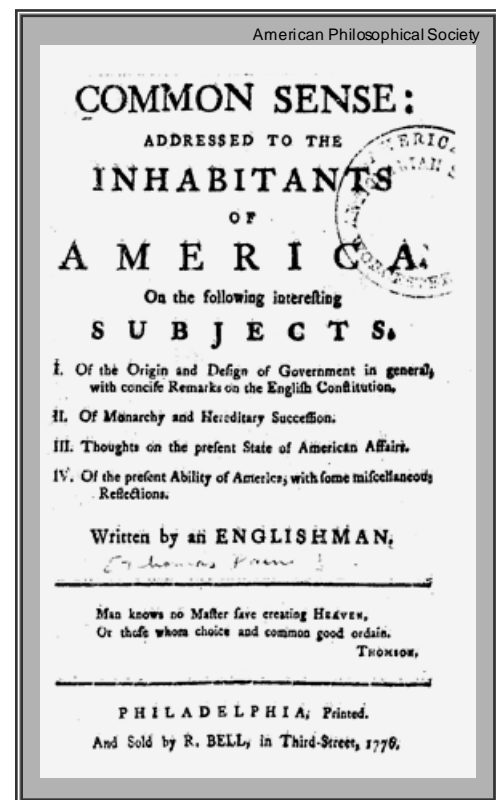
__HANNAH GRIFFITTS__

__Upon reading a Book entitled Common Sense__

Philadelphia, January 1776

From a well-to-do Quaker family in Philadelphia, Hannah Griffitts wrote poetry throughout the revolutionary period that hailed moderation and condemned extremism from both Patriots and Loyalists. Here she labels Thomas Paine—author of the widely read pro-revolution pamphlet *Common Sense*, published in January 1776—a “Snake beneath the Grass.” She grieves that moderate political voices are no longer tolerated, indeed called “friends of tyranny,” and that reconciliation with Great Britain has become a lost option.

The Vizard drop'd, see Subtlety prevail,
Thro' ev'ry Page of this fallacious Tale,
Sylvania¹ let it not unanswered pass,
But heed the well guess'd Snake beneath the Grass,
A deeper Wound at Freedom ne'er was made,
Then by this Oliverian² is display'd.
Orders confounded — Dignities thrown down,
Charters degraded equal with the Crown,
The impartial Press, most partially maintain'd
Freedom infring'd & Conscience is restrain'd,
The moderate man is held to public View,
“The Friend of Tyranny & Foe to you,”
Deny'd the common Right to represent
Forbid to give his Reasons for Dissent,
Whilst base Informers—(Own'd³ a public Pest)
Are round the land encourag'd & caress'd
Our Representatives — the People's Choice
Are held contemptuous by this daring Voice.
Persons are seiz'd & Posts monopoliz'd
And all our Form of Government despis'd—
—Then from this “Specimen of Rule” beware,
Behold the Serpent & avoid his Snare.
'Tis not in Names, our present Danger lies
Sixty as well as one can tyrannize,
Ah! then awake Sylvania & beware,
The fatal Danger of this subtle Snare,
Hold fast your own, your charter'd Rights maintain
Nor let them weave the Snare into the Chain,
And whilst firm Union stands⁴ the British Foes,
Let not the native Hand your Date of Freedom close.—



¹ Pennsylvania.

² Griffitts is likening Paine to Oliver Cromwell, an English politician who established a brief republic in England in the mid 1650s, after the execution of King Charles I, but came to exercise tyrannical authority.

³ *Own'd a public Pest*, i.e., although radical voices are admitted to be dangerous, they are yet “encouraged and caressed.”

⁴ Withstands.