

EARLY MODERN GENDER MULTIPLICITY: AGENCY, LOYALTY AND  
CONSTANCY IN LADY MARY WROTH'S *THE FIRST PART OF  
THE COUNTESS OF MONTGOMERY'S URANIA*

THESIS

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by

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

A work is not read in a vacuum, void of interpretation on the part of the reader, but is approached applying some sort of subjective belief system, intentional or unintentional. To read a female authored work that does not employ the “victim feminism” Naomi Miller suggests in *Changing the Subject* one must substitute some approach in its place (12). In other words, understanding women writers as victims may subvert the reader’s ability to identify empowered, multi-gendered female or male characters. It is the student’s and the scholar’s responsibility to choose, for myriad reasons, what the student may call the “mindset” and the scholar the “theory” when taking on even a subsection of a vast and, potentially, influential work such as Mary Wroth’s *Urania I*. Therefore, I propose reading Wroth using an approach that assumes her creative prose is influenced by her agency and the empowerment encouraged by her family. Wroth’s creative process may have been informed by experience closer to Catherine Malabou’s: a woman mimics her teachers, questions her teachers, then moves beyond the current teachings to create something original, be it dialogue and written text in Malabou’s case or dialogue and written text in Wroth’s case.

Catherine Malabou is a French philosopher who wrote the book *Changing Difference* (2011) as an homage to the personal and academic development that took place during her academic studies and later in her decision to break away from Derrida to

develop as a woman philosopher. *Changing Difference* provides a general overview of philosophical questions and explorations that are pertinent to a discussion about whether or not the feminine in feminist, post-feminist, queer theory and gender studies is continuing to simply mimic what the patriarchy creates or if it is possible that a woman might develop an original philosophy, what Malabou coins “new territory” (112). Trained in Aristotelian philosophy, Malabou’s determination during her university years to be better than her male counterparts led her to the conclusion that feminist, post-feminist, queer theory and gender studies (American and French) run the risk of robbing the feminine from women, if the feminine is what they want. In her explanation of the three stages for developing into a woman philosopher, Malabou uses her personal experiences in secondary and university education in France, as well as her decision to break away from Derrida (whom she studied under directly) to discuss what she hopes might be a map for women in general to embrace rather than deny the designation woman, if one so chooses. Malabou describes her personal experience because she believes that she cannot speak for everyone, but hopes to provide an option that eliminates the violent denial of the feminine and, in turn, the option to be a woman “anything.” The stages she suggests a woman goes through in order to arrive in “new territory” serve as an overlay for a broader, inclusive reading of Mary Wroth’s *Urania I*. By “broader and inclusive” I mean that Malabou’s approach allows Wroth’s portrayal of gender to be explored in terms of the individual character’s development rather than in terms of the limits of Wroth’s characters’ possibilities related to gender. Most of the leading scholars on Mary Wroth agree with Naomi Miller and Margaret Hannay (author of the most recent and comprehensive biography of Wroth), that Wroth’s treatment of gender is progressive for

her time. Hannay writes on the first page of the biography that Wroth “challenged gender conventions” (1). Her philosophy informs a reading of *Urania I* because Wroth similarly lacked models for a woman as author and publisher. A model of a woman philosopher for Malabou existed only outside of the university system just as a model for a woman writer existed only outside of the university system during Wroth’s time. Neither Wroth nor Malabou had a model for how to write and develop their particular genre without striking out on their own; both were operating in new territory.

Wroth’s *Urania I* is informed by philosophy in that her familial, political, social, educational, and literary context were all informed and influenced by the classical philosophers who formed the canon of university education, the same Aristotelian education to which Malabou refers. Classical philosophy informed both formal and informal education during the seventeenth century. University education centered on translation of Greek or Latin texts and those ideas informed literature, politics, social norms, and ultimately both Catholicism and Protestantism. Wroth’s text is not heavily laden with overt religious references, but it is couched in classical Greek mythology and geography and informed by the writing styles, philosophies, and texts of medieval and early modern writers such as Boccaccio, Cervantes, her famous uncle Philip Sidney, her aunt, The Countess of Pembroke Mary Sidney Herbert, Edmund Spenser, and possibly Christine de Pizan. All of these writers treated philosophy and gender as it pertained to both the patriarchal paradigm and the creative act of writing. In *The Book of the City of Ladies*, Christine’s narrator defends women against attacks by men who insist that “the behavior of women is inclined to and full of every vice” (4). However, her work results in a city walled off, separate from and not a part of everyday life. Christine’s narrative

distinguishes three categories: virtuous women, women who lack virtue, and men. Wroth's work is quite different from Christine's in that *Urania I* explores many possibilities of not only feminine but also masculine representations that interact and are sometimes virtuous, but sometimes not, and yet are treated compassionately. Spenser grapples with female rule in *The Faerie Queene*, presumably walking a tightrope between condemnation and exultation of a female ruler. Spenser treats gender, but does so with a slightly different result than Wroth in that overt judgments are made about feminine and masculine role reversal. Britomart, who previously donned male armor and fought as knight in Book V of *The Faerie Queene* repeals the liberty of women and restores them to "mens subjection" (*canto vii.42*). While the influence of Christine's and Spenser's work in Wroth's writing is a likely scenario, her uncle Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* and his *Apologie for Poetrie* were almost certainly literary and philosophical influences in her work, informing Wroth's writing by modeling a prose romance and offering an interpretation of what makes a poet important:

so no doubt the Philospher with his learned definitions, bee it of vertues, vices, matters of publick policie or privat government, replenisheth the memory with many infallible grounds of wisdom: which notwithstanding, lye darke before the imaginative and judging powre, if they bee not illuminated or figured foorth by the speaking picture of Poesie. (Sidney)

*Urania I* is such a speaking picture, illuminating Malabou's stages: *acting as if*, *acting together*, and *acting without* (Malabou 111).

Applying Malabou's theory of a woman's process moving toward original thought and creativity applies to Wroth's rhetorical situation. Prior to writing *Urania I*, Wroth

demonstrated agency and leadership, experienced decision-making power and experienced lack of power in decision-making. Wroth was well-educated in classical philosophical instruction through the people and literature that surrounded her but was also exposed to pamphlets and rhetoric lambasting women who veered from gender norms. In the midst of these contradictions she wrote and published the first known prose fiction by an Englishwoman. Malabou identifies the three stages a pioneering woman like Wroth experiences in her educational process. The first stage, *acting as if*, “refers to the training years” (Malabou 111). *Acting as if* is the acceptance and mimicry of masculine education in the absence of another option. The second stage, *acting together*, is the process of questioning the masculine paradigm and the simultaneous feminine questioning that the mimicry of that paradigm by a person gendered female implies. Malabou relies on Luce Irigaray’s proposal that a woman’s mimicry of masculine paradigms supersedes being enveloped by the masculine. The female philosopher, or poet in the case of Wroth, subverts masculine dominance because mimicry by a person gendered female makes visible what the masculine attempts to make invisible: the feminine. Because the masculine language is used to make the feminine visible the masculine is not denied, yet the feminine is acknowledged, making gender multiplicity inevitable (Irigaray in Malabou, 124).

*Acting together* may be applied to Wroth’s actual act of writing the first known prose romance by an Englishwoman, but it is also applicable in representations of characters who are feminine yet possess both female and male characters gender traits. Where *acting as if* is the stage in which a woman is educated according to the patriarchal paradigm, *acting together* is the stage in which the feminine (in *Urania I*, those

characters and traits gendered female) mimics and, therefore, becomes visible, necessarily questioning masculine privilege in the very act of feminine presence. According to Malabou, once the questioning and subversion of the masculine begins, the outcomes are limited to three possibilities. The questioning and subversion may cease, leaving the patriarchy intact and active. Or, once questioning and subversion begin, the acts of questioning may result in moving forward into new territory at some times and returning to the status quo at others. Finally, questioning and subversion of the patriarchal paradigm may result in *acting without*, moving into “new territory” entirely, a place wherein understanding the catalyst for the shift is irrelevant because something new has replaced the status quo.

Malabou’s own experience, the experience that lays the foundation for *acting as if* and *acting together*, developed “in France [where] no woman theorist appears in the title of any program of philosophical study whatsoever, in either secondary or further education” (112). Malabou, like Wroth, had no female model for that which she studied. Malabou was told, along with the other young women in her classes, that during certain parts of the lectures she need not even listen, because the women would not be tested on those philosophical ideas that were beyond their understanding (113). Like Wroth, Malabou was empowered and then denied power based on her gender. Wroth and Malabou responded by *acting as if*, receiving the only education provided in a patriarchal paradigm. They *act together*, Malabou developing and writing a philosophy of possibility for the woman philosopher and Wroth writing sonnets and prose, making the traditional heroes heroines within traditionally masculine genres. Finally, Wroth *acts without*, producing a written text that frequently makes adherence to gender conventions a

secondary concern, whereas many earlier female and male writers, such as Christine and Spenser, did not seem to write gender without making judgments about adherence to gender norms central to the discourse.

Wroth did not have a literary paradigm to use as a model for gender multiple characters so she created one; a new territory with little value placed on adherence to gender norms. In *Urania I*, characters may possess both feminine and masculine traits with positive results, allowing application of Malabou's stages that the philosopher may not have considered. Wroth's foray into "new territory" in her treatment of feminine and masculine gender combinations allows the possibility that the masculine is suffering victimization in the patriarchal paradigm and must also learn to *act without*. Opening up the possibility in the romance that feminine and masculine gender traits and roles may reverse, combine, or stay exactly as they are--that is, that they are gender multiple--focuses the reader's attention on the individual character's responses regarding agency, loyalty, and constancy.

Applying Malabou's philosophy to Wroth's work, a reader has a greater chance of recognizing the characters and episodes in which the individual characters are valued according to their agency, loyalty and constancy rather than adherence to gender conventions. If a reader approaches Wroth's text having read Malabou and having grappled with the possibility that first, one does not have to deny one's current understanding of gender in order to understand that the patriarchy is pervasive; second, that gender multiplicity is valued; third, that it is possible that Wroth wrote from a place of agency and with the intellectual and emotional freedom to imagine new territory for her characters, then reading *Urania I* may prove to be a gender equitable option for

studying early modern literature. The following chapters explore how Malabou's three stages may be helpful in mapping some of Wroth's characters to produce a more gender equitable reading of *Urania I*.

The following biographical information reveals the relevance of the stages to the writer's life before explaining Malabou's stages more fully. Mary Wroth grew up in a family that empowered women to make decisions and praised them for writing and publication. Perhaps no greater influence on Wroth's writing may be cited than that of her aunt, Mary Sidney Herbert, Countess of Pembroke. The Countess of Pembroke served as patron to writers such as Edmund Spenser, Thomas Moffet, and Abraham Fraunce, all of whom praised her brother Philip Sidney. From 1588 to 1608 she published and republished her writing under her own name at a time when other women refrained from doing so (Hannay 5, 38-39). She was praised in elite literary and social circles for her literary accomplishments. Literary success by a woman as prominent as the Countess of Pembroke may account for Wroth's willingness to write, publish, and receive praise for literary accomplishments in both private and public realms. Mary Wroth was born in October 1588 to Robert Sidney and Barabara Gamage and as a child would have had access to all of her aunt's publications. Wroth also had access to dedicatory notes to the Countess in publications by acclaimed authors such as Edmond Spenser, Abraham Fraunce, and Michael Drayton, which confirmed the identity of Sidney women as writers (39). In addition to the influence of her literary aunt was the encouragement of her father who seems to have had a special bond with his oldest daughter, often naming her specifically in letters to his wife written during long absences in service to the queen. In contrast, her father grouped together the rest of her nine brothers and sisters without

naming them individually in his letters (Hannay 25). Robert Wroth even commends his daughter's writing progress (43). His unique and encouraging relationship with young Wroth shows up again later when he and his wife allow her to make decisions for the household when she is only nine (62). Robert Wroth's tendency to share authority with his wife and eldest daughter seems to have nurtured a confidence in female decision-making that becomes a theme in Wroth's work. For example, the work's namesake, Urania, and heroine, Pamphilia, possess personal and public decision-making power regarding rule and relationships. Pamphilia's father declares that he will not go against his daughter's wishes (263:1-4)<sup>1</sup>. The agency that was an everyday element beginning early in childhood would have provided Wroth with a sense of agency in the family and confidence in her own decision-making. Her familial experience combined with her models of women writers and authority figures suggests that shared agency between women and men, albeit categorical and not blanket, may have shaped the shared agency of female and male characters in her prose fiction. When Robert wrote to Barbara encouraging her not to come to Flushing during one of their separations, he ended the letter by saying that he would leave the decision to his wife because pleasing her contented him (Hannay 42).

Similarly, Robert Sidney is said to have relied heavily on the support and guidance of the matriarchs in his family after the death of his prominent uncles (Henry Hastings, Ambrose Dudley, and Robert Dudley), his oldest brother Philip Sidney, his younger brother Thomas, and both of his parents. Robert wrote letters prolifically, seeking counsel from and offering it to his sister, the Countess of Pembroke, and his wife.

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<sup>1</sup> The citations of *Urania I* that appear throughout the thesis reference the page number and lines in *The First Part of The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, 1621 by Mary Wroth, edited by Josephine A. Roberts.

Moreover, Wroth developed into adulthood under a female ruler widely perceived as successful. Under the subsequent rule of King James, perceived to be anti-female, Wroth would have nevertheless known that women like Queen Elizabeth were competent to hold positions of authority. Wroth's close family members had been loyal to the crown and subject to Queen Elizabeth, who had propagated ideas that subverted gender binaries. She dressed in both armor and skirts. The possibility of gender multiplicity was tangible to Wroth in that women she knew served as ruler, decision-makers, producers of literature, and patrons. Throughout her childhood and early adolescence Wroth's agency was encouraged by matriarchal and patriarchal familial and literary influences as well as the history of successful female rule.

Practices related to "love matches" in Wroth's family added to the experiences Wroth had to draw upon when writing *Urania I*. Children of aristocrats and gentry were generally allowed to turn down one marriage contract or proposal, but it was entirely within the right of powerful family members to deny the request of a daughter to marry her preferred match and instead demand the best economic match (34). While Wroth witnessed the limitations of a patriarchal society in its control of marital choices, she also experienced the positive results of a family wherein individuals could exercise some agency in selecting a spouse. Her grandfather and grandmother, Henry Sidney and Mary Dudley, her father and mother, and some aunts and uncles seem to have had truly affectionate marriages; in some cases the female and in some the male refused more politically or financially beneficial matches effecting a family-approved "love match" (Hannay 34). Even so, Wroth's own father, who doted over his wife, was said to have had numerous extramarital liaisons. Also, as Hannay and Josephine Roberts have described,

the love of Wroth's life, her cousin William Herbert, was no model of constancy. Yet Wroth continued a relationship with him and apparently bore two children with him out of wedlock, neither of whom he acknowledged despite Wroth's repeated attempts to have him do so. After the death of Wroth's contractual husband, Robert Wroth, Mary Wroth returned to the family estate at Pembroke. Heavily in debt and with two illegitimate children, Wroth never remarried (108). Wroth's experiences in marriage and in her family, like her depictions of gender, were neither entirely positive nor negative but a combination of possibilities. Varied examples of agency, loyalty, and constancy appear to be woven into the fabric of Wroth's life for both women and men.

Biographical information interweaves Wroth's familial and political connections. For instance, Wroth's famous cousin, Walter Raleigh, visited her home when she was a young girl of eight years. Wroth must have had lasting memories of a visit from him after his return from his first voyage to Guiana in 1595. Raleigh was chastised for marrying one of Queen Elizabeth's "gentlewomen," Bess Throckmorton, behind the queen's back in 1591. Queen Elizabeth subsequently delayed him an audience because of her anger over the unapproved match. During the delay Raleigh visited the Sidneys. As a young girl who witnessed gender multiplicity and female rule, Wroth was also witness to her father's and Raleigh's subjection and loyalty to the female crown, except in matters concerning marriage. In matters concerning marriage and personal relationships her mother and father as well as her cousin Raleigh challenged the Queen's authority. Wroth's father and her aunt undertook letter writing campaigns beginning in 1595 to the Queen to reconsider his assignment to posts away from his family at Penshurst in Kent. However, in public matters concerning national policy all those closest to Wroth remained loyal. The heroine

and Queen of Pamphilia in *Urania I*, who may be one of Wroth's own avatars, must balance her private and public spheres of influence and demonstrate that loyalty to the crown and constancy to a paramour are not mutually exclusive. The successes and failures associated with the agency of the individual, the constancy of the paramour, and the loyalty of family to each other and the crown are recurring themes in Wroth's own life and in her fictional characters.

Wroth received formal training similar to that of many aristocratic young women, with instruction in French, the mastery of an instrument, singing, and dancing. Hannay claims that by age twelve Wroth was becoming as well-educated as her aunt and her father (72). Josephine Roberts observes that *Urania I* illustrates Wroth's mastery of geography and literary works that include Ovid, Cervantes, Christine, and Spenser. Yet in connection to her mother and father Hannay has the most telling observations about Wroth's foray into new territory when, as discussed above, she as a child made decisions about household affairs. According to Hannay,

she had some say in who would be hired as steward of the family estate when the family left for flushing . . . . It is unclear just why Mall [Wroth] wanted Studley to be left as steward, and even more unclear why Barbara and thus Robert would weigh so heavily the desires of a nine year old girl.  
(62)

In this instance Studley was awarded the position of steward as young Wroth requested. Wroth, even as a young child, was opinionated, well-educated, communicated well via written word and was involved in the outcomes of her own circumstances as well as those of her family. The biographical information that Hannay, Roberts, Miller, and other

scholars point to lays the groundwork for an understanding that Wroth, as early as age nine, was already making forays into the new territory to which Malabou refers in her text; a territory in which a woman arrives after first mimicking the patriarchy (*acting as if*), then questioning the patriarchy (*acting together*), and finally disengaging from the patriarchal paradigm (*acting without*) to employ her sense of agency (111). Ultimately, Wroth wrote the first known prose romance by an Englishwoman and, as the following chapters reveal, she developed some characters that demonstrate gender multiplicity related to agency, loyalty, and constancy.

## CHAPTER II

### GENDER MULTIPLICITY AND AGENCY

Agency is significant in *Urania I* regardless of the subject's adherence to gender norms common to courtly feminine and masculine literary constructs found in seventeenth century literature. In *Gender and Heroism in Early Modern England*, Mary Beth Rose makes the point that recent scholarship challenges the idea that literary conventions of gender are art mimicking life and she suggests that women may have exercised more agency in reality than is typical in literary conventions (prologue, xvii). While it may be true that women had more agency in early modern England than simply the power they could extract from a position of submission to violence, one cannot deny the pervasiveness of the conventions of gender in medieval and early modern literature that promoted feminine submission and masculine violence. Christine de Pizan speaks to feminine submission and masculine violence throughout the history of philosophy and literature in the previous example given from *The Book of the City of Ladies*. Spenser's *Faerie Queene* also offers examples of submission in Britomart's retraction of female liberty in Book V. Spenser writes about masculine violence in the disrobing of the evil Duessa in Book I as well as the "goodly" Florimell's fear of, and continual need to flee, masculine characters who pursue her in Book III (Britomart: *canto vii.42*; Duessa: *canto viii.46-49*; Florimell: *canto vi.54* and *canto vii.19*). Rose's study centers on gender and

heroism. Males dominate the public sphere through action, often violent, and women have power in the private sphere only if they are silent, chaste, and obedient. But the public/active, private/passive gender distinction in literature that scholars have so painstakingly revealed when discussing early modern literature is, at the very least, malleable in *Urania I*, making the circumstances ripe for the possibility of a discussion about an author and characters “acting out” and arriving in “new territory” in an early modern prose fiction. Rose’s claim that characters gendered female, whether male or female, are necessary in literature in order to move the masculine representation to a place of superiority and that masculine representations often embody both genders in order to achieve superiority supports Malabou’s view that a feminine gender cannot be denied any more than a masculine one can be denied. Wroth’s characters demonstrate gender multiplicity and the necessity of the agency of the individual regardless of sex markers or gender norms. The significance of agency is explored most visibly in the heroine Pamphilia and the work’s namesake, Urania, but agency is pivotal in the outcomes of characters with which these two women come into contact, as well.

The Urania and Perissus episode that opens the work offers an example of female and male interaction in which the traditional literary conventions promoting gender adherence are reversed and then combined. Right away in the episode the reader is alerted that value is placed on subjects according to their agency and not according to adherence to gender conventions. Gender multiplicity and agency are inseparable for Urania. She first appears as a young shepherdess whose adoptive parents tell her she is adopted and her lineage is unknown. Urania laments her situation but the narrator discloses that the most difficult aspect of the situation for Urania is ignorance. Urania

leaves her duties as a shepherdess, because she is ignorant of her origins, and she ascends the side of a hill into a cave: “The way was hard, though by some windings making the ascent pleasing. Having attained the top, she saw under some hollow trees the entrie into the rocke: she fearing nothing but the continuance of her ignorance, went in” (2:15-18). Urania’s hidden royal lineage is soon revealed in the narrative. The narrator’s description of Urania’s discomfort with ignorance and her enjoyment of strenuous physical activity create a female representation that defies seventeenth century expectations of gender, expectations in which a female character of royal descent would not pursue strenuous physical activity in or out of the areas of domesticity. While the setting is beyond Urania’s control because of her status as a shepherdess (natural rather than domestic) it is the writer’s decision to place her in the natural environment. The writer also decides to have Urania respond to her environment actively rather than passively. When readers discover Urania’s royal lineage, the discovery also reveals the new territory in which the Urania character is residing because, according to convention, regardless of her circumstances, her status and lineage would determine her responses rather than her circumstances determining her responses. Yet Urania’s sense of agency determines her response to circumstances rather than gender conventions and norms. Already Wroth offers readers a feminine representation that satisfies stage two, *acting together*, of Malabou’s process for arriving at new territory.

The theoretical overview provides an abbreviated definition of Malabou’s second stage, *acting together*, that needs to be elaborated in order to fully appreciate its application to the Urania-Perissus episode and to other characters as the chapter on agency unfolds. As explained in the introduction, *acting as if* is stage one, in which an

individual is educated according to the patriarchal paradigm in the absence of another option. The implication of stage one is that an individual's interpretation of people and events is derived from a masculine-centered language and construction of reality that attempts to deny the feminine. Stage two encompasses the moments in which the feminine, not necessarily female or male, stops receiving and begins interacting with and questioning the masculine version or construction of reality. If what readers experience is a masculine-centered construction of reality, then by default the interpretation of what is read is either in line with or deviates from a masculine centered construction of reality. What Malabou explores in stage two, *acting together*, results in a sort of deconstruction of the idea that a masculine-centered reality exists. She points to Judith Butler's analysis of performativity, examining excerpts from *Bodies that Matter* that result in the idea that the feminine cannot be reduced, is always existing, and that, in fact, no origin of a binary feminine or masculine exists. Malabou's sums up the possibility that no original binary exists in the following passage:

“Acting together” would perhaps be to enter into the market of this symbolic exchange [the exchange of gender or bodies], to co-author, for example to no longer imitate authority but rather to multiply its masks, playing Duck, Duck, Goose with bodies, to pass among them. (Malabou 135)

From this perspective, woman in stage two is not simply a vessel into which the masculine is deposited, from which the feminine evolves, but is, instead, co-authoring. Stage two is the stage in which the idea of binaries becomes visible because *acting together*, necessarily, challenges the existence of binaries. Understanding Wroth's sense

of agency in the rhetorical situation that informs her writing and applying Malabou's concept of *acting together* in which all forms of performance are co-authored and authority is not imitated, but multiplied, defy the possibility of a reading based on "victim feminism" and promote a reading in which masculine language becomes a vessel for a foray into new territory of gender multiplicity. While Urania, Perissus, and the rest are identified as "she" and "he," it is a character's willingness to be agent that often determines her or his fate, while binary gender adherence is varied and malleable.

Returning to the Urania and Perissus episode, in the cave, Urania happens upon Perissus and chastises him for his inaction. She asks him why he continues to grieve rather than avenge his mistress's murder. Perissus counters that he promised his dead love he would stay away from her and her family, but Urania challenges his decision. The narrator describes Urania as being "brave of spirit" and Perissus as static, frozen, crying, while he demands of himself that "truth and shame make thee doe something worthy of such a Love" (3:35). Perissus's lament includes the implied admission that he lacks agency. He also believes his story will "fasten too much sadness" in Urania, but he is mistaken. Urania responds, charging Perissus to "Leave these teares, and woman-like complaints no way befitting the valiant Perissus, but like a brave Prince . . . revenge her death on her murderers; and after, if you will celebrate her funerals with your owne life giving, that will be a famous act" (15:17-20). Perissus can think of no better recourse than to lay dying and crying in a cave, while Urania envisions vengeance by murder to avenge a wrong and then suicide to add fame to the act of vengeance. Perissus is admonished by Urania, and Urania is valorized by Perissus when he calls her "fair," "wise," and "incomparable." This episode might be deconstructed to conclude that

Urania's character is only trying to restore a masculine construction in Perissus.

However, Wroth develops constructions of gender throughout the romance not limited to binary either/or categories in a single episode. Readers know at this point in the text that the narrator values agency and devalues static behavior or defeat.

Taking a snapshot of this episode separate from how Urania and Perissus are portrayed as the narrative progresses may result in analysis that relies on a particular quote or scene in order to justify an argument for the restoration of adherence to gender norms. What one learns as the narrative unfolds is that Urania is not solely an action-oriented female representation, but also compassionate and encouraging. Likewise, Perissus is not solely static and lamenting, but is capable of combining feeling with action. The narrative valorizes agency regardless of literary constructs of gender adherence or deviance. Furthermore, Urania's comment that Perissus's tears are "woman-like" seems an elementary irony, coming from a woman who fears only ignorance and seeks out strenuous activity. Readers may also understand in the comment the subversion of the feminine construct that is implied in the contradiction between Urania's comment and her agency. The development of gender multiplicity through the valorization of agency continues as the narrative progresses so that concluding that Urania is trying to restore order by urging Perissus to be "masculine" is something similar to concluding that Perissus is "woman-like" because he laments. Both conclusions rely on a reading that looks for "victim feminism" rather than a reading that allows for new territory. Perhaps Wroth's characters are, indeed, gender adherent, but gender adherent only if the definition is that each character adheres to its own particular set of gender combinations.

Individualized gender combinations are evident in feminine and masculine

representations. Perissus, for example, laments, is static, dismisses women, and praises the counsel of a woman. He enters into new territory when his experience with Urania subverts patriarchal expectations and he begins to praise her wisdom. Urania does not accept Perissus's initial judgment that she is not to be taken seriously because she is a woman; she acts with agency and, as a result, both of the characters end up in new territory. Urania *acts without*, as evidenced by her response to her circumstances and her environment, she *acts without* when she counters Perissus in the cave, and both characters end up in "new territory" when each deviates from the literary conventions that promote gender binary, instead combining feminine and masculine gender traits. The narrator does not explicitly judge whether or not the results of the characters' dialogues and actions are acceptable or unacceptable, but the descriptors used for each character imply that the results of their interactions and their respective gender combinations are to be admired. The list of attributes describing Urania include that she abhors ignorance, seeks strenuous activity, that she is fair and wise but also dainty. Urania values knowledge, is brave of spirit, compassionately inspires weeping princes to vengeance, and laments in the form of sonnets. Perissus is described as desirable when he praises Urania and then becomes active again, donning a suit of armor. Each character is allowed to exhibit more than the binary feminine or masculine traits and, in this episode, admired for agency.

Perissus describes his love for Limena, whom he laments and who contrasts Pamphilia. Limena does adhere to early modern literary constructs of a feminine representation and suffers for her unquestioning submission. Her tragedy begins with her hierarchy of obedience to her father; she places this obedience above all other passions.

Limena does not speak up for herself but submits to a loveless marriage contracted by her father, “her tongue faintly delivering, what her heart so much detested; loathing almost it selfe, for consenting in shew to that which was most contrarie to it selfe,” her marriage (10:21-39). In the Limena episode her father’s decision to use his daughter as a material good to strengthen prosperity and alliances results in pain and despair, the cost of the exchange of a person for material gain. Limena’s father commits her to a loveless marriage, obedience is esteemed above all else, and Limena does not fight or speak up for herself. Limena’s lack of agency and her father’s objectification result in the jealousy, resentment, fear, and violence that shroud the episode involving Limena, her husband, and Perissus.

A comparison between Limena and Pamphilia provides revealing discourse about the individuality of gender combinations and the value of agency in the narrative. Pamphilia’s father, unlike Limena’s, promotes his daughter’s wishes, esteeming these above all other passions regardless of his own opinion about the choice Pamphilia makes not to marry (262-63). Pamphilia openly discusses with her father her desire not to marry Prince Leandrus, while Limena does not verbalize her wishes. Neither character admits to having feelings for another (Amphilanthus and Perissus respectively) but Pamphilia is clear about not marrying Leandrus while Limena does not speak up for herself. Moreover, Limena does not attempt to protect herself from her abusive husband. Instead, she submits to acts of violence and is tortured until Perissus, heeding Urania’s wise counsel, returns to free her from being bound and whipped by her husband (84-85). Urania’s agency inspires Perissus’s agency and results in saving Limena’s life. Pamphilia’s agency ultimately secures her freedom from a loveless marriage as well as

the ability to keep her status as Queen of Pamphilia. Limena's lack of agency results in submission to violence and torture. In the examples of the agency and gender combinations demonstrated by Urania, Perissus, Limena, and Pamphilia, Wroth's literary constructs of early modern gender and agency are not limited to the binary of an active male and passive female, or even to the reverse, but are specific to the individual character and demonstrate the privilege afforded agency.

Shortly after Perissus leaves to avenge Limena, Urania encounters two young men whom the narrator describes as combining feminine and masculine traits. The young men's gender multiplicity subverts the trope of the power of beauty found in (or on) a woman having the power to stop an attacking beast. Urania sees a wolf approaching and kneels to accept her fate. When the wolf suddenly stops, the narrator satirizes the construct of beauty overcoming nature: ". . . the beast running towards her of sudden stood still; one might imagine, seeing such a heavenly creature, did amase her, and threaten for meddling with her: but such conceits were vaine, since beasts will keepe their owne natures . . ." (19:25-26). The wolf stops because two young men whom the narrator describes as being nearly as beautiful as Urania, though masculine, chase and put down the wolf. The physical description of the two young men emphasizes traditionally feminine traits: "faces of sweetness . . . dainte natural curling [hair] . . . curles [that] so prettily plaid . . . so white was their skinne . . ." (19:36-20:6). Urania states that their beauty is a mixture of "mildnesse and sweetnesse" (20:16). While Urania and Limena are both described as beautiful, the detailed femininity of the young men's description is far greater than any given the two women. In this case the characters that overcome the literary trope combine feminine and masculine traits. A mere twenty pages into a six

hundred and sixty-one page romance, each interaction between feminine and masculine representations has revealed the value afforded agency in a variety of gender multiple-characters. Wroth reimagines literary conventions that are traditionally pivotal to medieval and early modern prose fiction and poetry. A female is agent, physical, beautiful, brave and wise; an aristocratic male acknowledges and submits to wise female counsel; an obedient female, rather than admired or vindicated, is violently abused; the power of feminine beauty is satirized; beauty and power are combined in masculine representations that overcome animal nature (the wolf). Gender multiplicity and agency, not adherence to gender convention, stop the wolf. Yet in the following episode the narrator makes an explicit judgment about men having “stronger and bolder spirits” (21:36). The moments in the work that support feminine and masculine binaries, such as this one, might cause a reader to forget the more pervasive discourse on the value of agency and gender multiplicity, but such moments also substantiate reading female-authored early modern works using more gender equitable approaches.

Arguing that gender multiplicity exists in the text does not mean that gender norming like the example above does not exist, it simply means that coming to either/or conclusions about authorial intention regarding the existence of “a” gender representation is impossible. Twenty-first century scholars, teachers, and students are often trained to minimize the value of works that privilege patriarchal gender binaries. Accepting patriarchal gender binaries as well as multiplicities as the privilege of the individual author must also continue to be a part of academic discussion. The goal is to understand that one is reading with a preconditioned bias; that seeing a statement such as “men are braver” may cause a response that assumes this is an author or a narrator who should be

minimized, a “victim feminism” approach. Such an automatic response neglects the possibility that the author is wielding the power of a rhetorical device to elicit a particular response from readers. The episode with Urania, the wolf, and the two young men serves to subvert a “victim feminism” reading even as it privileges the female author and acknowledges the very real circumstance of *Urania I* wherein a female author is in charge of each word on the page. Reading *Urania I* with the expectation that Wroth may develop a gender multiple masculine character to be as passive as he is strong and bold also allows a more gender equitable reading of *Urania I*.

With Wroth in charge of character development the feminine and masculine are alternately weak and strong. Wroth’s unconventional rendition of a female/male friendship involving Urania and Parselius begins with the narrator’s judgment that “men have the stronger and bolder spirits,” but the judgment is subverted by the actions that follow. Urania and Parselius meet after she leaves the cave. The two become slaves to love and spend the night lamenting before they board Parselius’s ship to sail back to Italy. The narrator describes Urania as being in misery due to her passion for Parselius, but Parselius is presented in “a lovers feare,” for which he must muster up courage (26-29). Once on the ship, which the group quickly discovers has been taken over by pirates, Urania misjudges Parselius’s languishing look for love. Actually, Parselius is confused and hopeless about a pirate having commandeered the ship. The pirate is slain and a terrible storm puts the ship on the coast of Cyprus rather than Italy. While the others sleep, weary from the storm, Urania feels obligated to guard her companions:

Some were laid down to see if rest would possesse them: others falne asleep, none enduring like the excellent Urania, which brought comfort (though in sorrow) to the loving and noble Parselius, never shewing feare or trouble: encouraging all. And yet she did feare, but seeing his, she dissembled hers, in care of not further harming him; she, I say, when all were gone to rest, stood Sentinel, but by her own appointment, love commanding her soule to take no advantage of restfull houres. 46.31-3

The narrator's description of Parselius is not contradictory if a reader approaches the text with an understanding of gender multiplicity as inclusive rather than binary. Parselius may be both brave and fearful. Urania, likewise, may be brave and dainty. The author creates a series of combinations rather than a series of contradictions. The narrative does not read specifically that no woman or no man endures like Urania, but that "none" endure like Urania. The narrator's claim minimizes difference and creates inclusive territory. Both males and females are asleep aboard the ship, but Urania feels compelled to stand watch. Similar to the introduction when Urania scales the side of a hill to enter a cave and prods Perissus into action, Urania's agency is the focus of the narrative when "She . . . stood Sentinael, but by her own appointment" (46.26). Gender is neither reduced to a binary nor is it privileged based on feminine or masculine traits. Urania demonstrates endurance, one example of agency, in the midst of knights and princes. Urania's agency is not judged by the narrator or the other characters; rather, it is left to the interpretation of the reader to decide what it means to endure, show no fear and comfort all. Parselius and the others do not question her, but continue on as if it is perfectly normal for Parselius to be fearful while Urania is not, everyone else sleeping

while she is not, and for all parties (male and female) to be so compassionate toward each other that “. . . their mutuall care, made them all cared for” (47:24).

Wroth addresses gender conventions directly when the party leaves the ship to attain supplies on Cyprus and approaches a palace. Urania and company first see the black marble pillars and base of the palace that houses the Throne of Love, an enchanted testing ground for agency, loyalty, and constancy. The narrator describes the pillars as having images of “brave and mighty men, and sweet and delicate ladies, such as had been conquered by loves power” (48:42-49). Both the feminine and the masculine are conquered by love and no option for gender multiplicity is offered in the description of the statues. The narrator describes the masculine statue as “brave and mighty” and the feminine as “sweet and delicate.” The palace containing these gender binary statues seems to hang in the air, the product of magic, explicitly unreal. Wroth creates alternatives to traditional gender binaries and alternatives to traditional female-male interactions. The masculine and feminine representations that Wroth treats up to this point in the narrative demonstrate a multiplicity of gender combinations in their agency so that when Wroth presents the cold, carven, marble images of the feminine and masculine binary, the contrast to the gender-multiple characters and their agency is stark.

The ongoing relationship between Urania and Parselius offers an example of an alternative to traditional binaries. The narrator implies gender multiplicity when explaining Parselius’s feelings for Urania demonstrated by the qualifying word “but” in the phrase, “friend and cousin . . . but in the feminine gender” (60:12-13). Parselius makes the “friend and cousin” distinction of Urania after the two are known to be cousins. The word “friend” is made problematic because of the word “but.” Examples of

the word “friend” in literary works often assume that, if the friend is male, it is a traditional, masculine friendship in the Aristotelian sense that friends are similar (Aristotle 147). However, when the word “friend” is applied to masculine and feminine representations in literature, the implication is often that the relationship is romantic, perhaps physical, and certainly not equal because the masculine has authority over the feminine (152). The reader already knows that Urania and Perissus are cousins by blood, so “cousin” is not what is being qualified by the word “but.” The narrator qualifies the word “friend.” The natural question, then is why? Why might the narrator, or the author, feel the need to qualify the word “friend” in this instance? The reader knows that Urania is a female, that she and Parselius are cousins and that they are romantically involved. Then why should Parselius need to say, “but in the feminine gender?” I would suggest that the qualifying “but” in the following passage is necessary because Urania’s and Parselius’s relationship fulfills the definition of “friend” according to the similarity and equal virtue necessary in the Aristotelian definition of friendship:

little joy felt he, Urania being lost . . . Sports and pleasures were every day offer’d, while he still knew of none, being in them as in another World; onely wherein his owne person was required, there his valour failed not, though his Soule which govern’d that, was elsewhere. Some dayes this lasted: but Parselius, whose love still urg’d him, could have no rest, colouring his paine with the losse of his friend and cousin, which indeed was the cause, but in the feminine gender. (60:5-13)

Urania’s character includes all of those traits necessary for both “friend” in the romantic sense and “friend” in the Aristotelian sense. She is a wise counselor, brave spirit, a loyal

sentinel, fearless in her encounters with physical danger, and she seeks adventure. When Parselius thinks of her, then, the narrator must make the feminine explicit because her actions have been quite masculine, recalling Malabou's idea that gender multiplicity is "not just two genders . . . . Masculine and feminine can refer to several of these gender identities at once, without referring to originary anatomical or social givens" (6). Urania's gender becomes indistinct based on her deviance from gender norms, her agency, and the author identifies the need to re-prescribe a gender to Urania so that it is understood that Urania fulfills masculine and feminine ideas of a friend.

While the two "friends" are gendered male and female, neither is decidedly masculine or feminine according to traditional literary constructs of the masculine-feminine binary. Parselius and Urania part after the first day that they meet and the narrator describes Urania's lament as miserable and passionate. Fear is not included. However, Parselius's lament includes hope, love and fear (25, 26). When the two are aboard Parselius's ship and the party is taken over by pirates, Parselius languishes, but Urania is encouraging and unafraid saying, "Be satisfied, my dearest friend . . . and hazard not your selfe in this kinde . . . but rather give us example, as confidently, and mildly to suffer this adversity, as happily we might have enjoyed the other we expected" (29). Aboard the ship, Urania stands sentinel and encourages Parselius to lead while Parselius is reluctant to suggest anything to the party because something bad may happen. Urania demonstrates characteristics of masculinity necessary for an Aristotelian, virtuous friendship. Urania calls Parselius "friend" when she counsels him on the ship and Urania is described as Parselius's "friend . . . but in the feminine gender." While Urania is described as beautiful and dainty she is also, in the Aristotelian sense of friendship, quite

masculine. Urania demonstrates gender multiplicity through her agency which gives the narrator cause to qualify her as Parselius's "friend . . . but in the feminine gender."

Pamphilia, the romance's most enduring heroine, also exhibits gender multiplicity and agency. During several episodes Pamphilia is afforded the kind of freedom and power traditionally given to masculine characters in literature. As mentioned earlier Pamphilia remains unwed to retain her crown and to remain constant to Amphilanthus. In turn, her father clarifies that he will not go against her wishes despite his own. At first, he says he supports a match with Prince Leandrus, but his support does not include caveats that subvert the totality of Pamphilia's agency (263). Another episode occurring later in the work describes Pamphilia's gender multiplicity and agency when she both swoons and engages in acts of physical bravery and physical strength despite the presence of a knight that would, according to literary conventions leading up to the early seventeenth century, be the more likely candidate to pursue the courses of action Pamphilia chooses (583). Pamphilia differs from Urania in that she is raised at court and not exposed to the same sort of physical labor associated with a shepherdess's duties and social position which only heightens Pamphilia's agency in the narrative. With the exception of Pamphilia hunting on horseback, not much is written about her physicality other than her beauty. Yet, when Amphilanthus disappears in a forest Pamphilia does not hesitate to "seeke him, sending all her traine severall waies in the same quest, taking only with her two Ladies that had held out the chase with her, and ten Knights" (575:25-27). Pamphilia falls to the ground when she sees Amphilanthus's armor cut to pieces with blood beside it. A Knight, Polarchus, attends to Pamphilia. Inserting Polarchus into the scene as the traditional knight coming to the aid of the weaker feminine character plays with but does

not satisfy traditional literary expectations. Wroth portrays Polarchus to be loyal, compassionate, and chivalrous alongside Pamphilia's demonstrations of agency rather than engaging in satire or subversive rhetoric about the traditional knight.

Wroth does not discredit the masculine as a preface to valuing the feminine; still, "Polarchus could no more move that [Amphilanthus's shield], than Pamphilia" (583:16-17). Pamphilia's weakness seems to be the base-line for feminine weakness when Polarchus begins to help her, but she proves to be active and strong. Both are portrayed as multiple gendered. Both weep, believing Amphilanthus is dead, until Pamphilia remembers that Amphilanthus did not have his armor when she last saw him. Both work to hang Amphilanthus's armor on a Crown of great stones encircling the area, but it is Pamphilia who creates and engraves the lines on the stone honoring Amphilanthus. Thinking that Amphilanthus may be held by an enchantment rather than dead, both start to leave and lament his loss, but "they saw out of holes in the stones, smoake, and fire" (583:25-26). The queen, not the knight, reaches for a ring of iron attached to the stone and opens it. Pamphilia tracks Amphilanthus, creates an epitaph and engraves it in his honor, and grabs the ring of iron to open a great stone only to see her love trapped inside:

a place like a Hell of flames, and fire, and as if many walking and  
 throwing pieces of men and women up and downe the flames, partly burnt,  
 and they still stirring the fire, and more brought in, and the longer she  
 looked, the more she discerned . . . Hell it selfe not being frightfull enough  
 to keepe her from passing through to him; so with as firme, and as hot  
 flames as those she saw, and more bravely and truly burning, she ran into  
 the fire. (583:27-43)

Pamphilia is the active character even when knights surround her and Polarchus is beside her at the opening to the Hell of Deceit described above. The knights are not passive, binary representations, but the feminine representation is the primary active character. In fact, the text reads that “Pamphilia adventured” to open the stone by the ring.

“Adventured” is an archaic word, in this use a verb to alert an attempt to risk something. Using it to describe Pamphilia’s actions while surrounded by knights who might be expected to do the adventuring may be interpreted as Wroth’s attempt to demonstrate gender multiplicity in Pamphilia.

Pamphilia, Urania, Perissus, and Parselius are individualized characters who do not adhere to a representation of gender multiplicity, a stereotypical gender multiple possibility, any more than they adhere to a gender binary. Each is feminine and masculine according to each one’s response to a situation. Wroth does not devalue traditionally masculine behavior in a feminine representation or traditionally feminine behavior in a masculine representation, but in the case of Limena, traditionally gender adherent behavior is negative when the character is not agent.

A reader may interpret a particular character’s response as privileged, but that interpretation offers an opportunity to reflect also on the privilege afforded agency over passivity. An understanding of Malabou’s gender multiplicity encourages a reader to look for more than one representation of gender, regardless of anatomical markers.

Challenging the binaries a reader might apply to an early modern work allows the opportunity to interpret the work differently than a feminist or victim feminism reading might result in. Remembering that Mary Wroth was empowered as a child by parents and that she is the first Englishwoman known to publish a prose romance makes the case for

*acting without* and “arriving in new territory.” Moreover, the instances of a character’s gender multiplicity that result from agency reveal the new territory that Wroth creates in prose fiction in the early modern period. Similarly, the next chapter explores the construction of gender multiplicity in Wroth’s characters when loyalty and disloyalty are central to the discourse.

### CHAPTER III

#### GENDER MULTIPLICITY AND LOYALTY

Loyalty, like agency, is not attributed to a particular “sex” or sexual orientation. Rather than privilege based on adherence to gender norms, it is the character’s adherence to loyalty that predicts outcomes and the privilege that character may enjoy. In *Changing Difference* Malabou discusses the idea of original biological malleability, an “original transformability” that precedes gender construction (138). In other words, gender must begin as malleable in order for it to be constructed, defying an essentialist feminine or masculine binary. Wroth seems to construct some of her characters to include the gender malleability Malabou discusses. Naomi Miller and other scholars point out that Wroth developed as a young woman and writer in a time in which gender binaries were, in reality, more malleable than conduct manuals might outline and male-authored prose might portray. In *Changing the Subject*, Miller notes that “those women whose writings threatened the normative social order of female subordination could refer at least implicitly back to the gynecocratic rhetoric of Queen Elizabeth, which performed the successful balancing act of combining the discourses of both subject and monarch, woman and ruler” (109). The early modern political and social environment in which the competing ideas of “female subordination” and “woman and ruler” coexist informed Wroth’s writing and the climate in which she developed as a woman and writer.

Wroth was not silent, not chaste, and not obedient according to early modern expectations (Eckerle 27). As mentioned in the introduction, she did not remarry after being widowed, even though she had two illegitimate children with her cousin, William Herbert of Pembroke. During this period of her life she wrote *Urania I* and included alternatives to the silent, chaste, obedient feminine literary representation of a female. As intriguing as the alternatives to submissive female representations may be, the malleability of gender in some of Wroth's characters, which extends discourse beyond female submission and feminine-masculine binaries, is a step into new literary territory, particularly for a female author. For example, in the story of a Duke who has a relationship with a young man, the "normative social order" is not threatened by female insubordination, but instead by male insubordination when the Duke ignores his obligations to his family and subjects. In another example involving Nereana, a female sovereign, it is not the insubordination of a female ruler that the narrator points to when summarizing the moral of Nereana's story, but instead the insubordination of all people and the need to understand that rulers and subjects must be loyal to each other. Instances of disloyalty predicate the conflicts the Duke and Nereana must face, and adherence to loyalty determines each character's value in the narrative. This chapter explores disloyalty and loyalty to reveal gender multiplicity in Wroth's narratives of the Duke and Nereana.

In Wroth's work loyalty usually signifies trust and the fulfillment of social contracts between friends, family members (including spouses), sovereigns (to each other and their subjects), and subjects (to their sovereigns). When one or more characters betray the trust implied in one of these relationships conflict arises between them and the

betrayed characters. While conflicts regarding loyalty may or may not be resolved, gender multiplicity is revealed when characters must contend with loyalty and disloyalty.

The Duke's participation in what appears to be a homoerotic relationship defying patriarchal gender norms is the first example of the value of loyalty regardless of adherence to gender norms, discussed below. The Duke ignores family and sovereign obligations because of his relationship with a young, unnamed male companion (34:37-41). The Duke loses his title and lands as a result of his disloyalty to his family and subjects, but after he reconciles with his wife, who remains loyal to him, his position is restored. In the second example discussed below, Nereana is a sovereign who struggles with an exaggerated sense of pride which results in her disloyalty to her subjects and her subjects' disloyalty to her. When Nereana's pride is restrained she learns the lesson of the limits of power, and afterwards she and her subjects are loyal to each other (496:24-30). The narrator's summation of Nereana's part in the narrative supports gender multiplicity and the value afforded loyalty when the narrator addresses the reader directly using indefinite pronouns to include "any" person rather than suggesting the resolution of conflict when a female ruler is humbled. A feminine representation of rule is used to demonstrate that, regardless of gender, "any" sovereign must learn limits to be a loyal ruler and subjects must learn to help sovereigns set limits to be loyal subjects. Both the Duke and Nereana demonstrate gender multiplicity while grappling with conflicts related to loyalty in families, to sovereigns, and to subjects.

The story of the Duke and his young, unnamed, male companion is a tale of disloyalty told from the perspective of an older man who is betrayed by a younger man. The disloyalty that the young, male companion commits follows an intimate relationship

in which the young man manipulates the Duke's feelings to gain a title and lands (35:3-5). The masculine-feminine binary is subverted using a dual male relationship. That relationship, as well as the Duke's subsequent reconciliation to his wife, demonstrates again the malleability of gender in relationships in Wroth's *Urania I*.

The Duke is disloyal to his wife and patriarchal obligations when he does not produce an heir to fulfill the political and social contract to his subjects and his family. He is also disloyal when he spends his time and energy positioning his young companion at court rather than lobbying for his friends and family (35:1-3). The Duke's feelings for his young companion are so intimate that he blames them for his inability to produce an heir with his wife: "besotted on a young man . . . as at last all delights and pastimes were to me tedious and lothsome, if not liking, or begun by him. Nay, my wives company in respect of his, was displeasing to me. Long time this continued, which continuance made me issue-less" (34:35-43). Producing no heir for his title and lands, the Duke destabilizes the security of his wife, his blood relatives and those aristocracy for whom he is politically, economically, and socially responsible in a patriarchal system. The innuendo that sexual intimacy with his wife is replaced by intimate feelings for his companion develops the Duke's story into more than one of disloyalty, revealing gender multiplicity in the homoerotic implication of his desire for his young companion.

The gender multiplicity revealed in the Duke's relationship with his young companion is overt, but the homoerotic implication is only implied because the young companion betrays the Duke. The young companion manipulates the Duke's feelings for his own gain rather than to reciprocate the Duke's feelings. The Duke makes his young companion his heir, to which his companion responds by committing the ultimate act of

disloyalty, manipulating a plot to kill the Duke and take over his title and property. In *The Gendering of Men, 1600-1750*, Thomas A. King discusses a possibility of gendering men that seems to frame the relationship between the Duke and his young companion and also explains the acts of disloyalty. While the Duke is “besotted” with the young man, the young man is cold and calculating when usurping the Duke. King argues that in the navigation of social and political landscapes in early modern times subjects played with gender to obtain favor with sovereigns and that “the rhetoric of pederastic dependence operated independently of the sex of its participants and cannot be taken as evidence of male-male sodomitical desire in particular” (23). King uses the term “pederastic” to describe not only an older male and an adolescent male, but also the powerful sovereign and the weaker subject. Wroth may be revealing this gender play as a means of obtaining political and social favor from a sovereign by portraying the young companion as a subject who manipulates a sovereign to gain title and lands without actually feeling anything of a homoerotic nature toward the Duke. The young companion is disloyal in an attempt to support his own material stability while the disloyalty the Duke commits threatens the stability of his family and subjects. The Duke may, indeed, use his power to manipulate a younger man, but that possibility is not explicit in the text. What is explicit is that the Duke ignores his obligations because he is “besotted” and the young man consciously manipulates the Duke’s feelings for material gain. Therefore, if the homoerotic exists it may be only on the Duke’s part, but even so the relationship reveals gender multiplicity. The characters’ acts of loyalty and disloyalty, not gender adherence, determine the outcomes in this episode.

However one chooses to read the existence of a homoerotic relationship between the Duke and his young companion, the narrative does describe the Duke's feelings for his young companion that demonstrate gender multiplicity and the companion's gender malleability surfaces amid acts of disloyalty. The Duke is blind to the impending betrayal by the object of his affection and his close relations leave court. The Duke observes that they were "expecting nothing but my ruine, seeing me so bewitch'd with my undoing. The plot was laid, and I thus betraide where most I trusted" (Wroth 35:6-7). The Duke is heartbroken by his young companion's betrayal when a hired man tells the Duke of the companions plan to kill him. The Duke wants the servant to kill him, to relieve him of the misery he feels over his young companion's betrayal, but the servant convinces the Duke to fake his own death instead and hide until the usurper can be dealt with (35:17-18). Even when the Duke is fully aware of the young companion's disloyalty, he cannot bring himself to wish ill on the object of his affections: "I consented to the concealing, but never could be wonne, to thinke of harming him" (35:15-16). The Duke remains emotionally invested in his young companion even after the young companion is disloyal. Rather than hinging the narrative entirely on punitive repercussions resulting from a relationship that deviates from adherence to gender norms, Wroth instead steers the narrative towards grace in response to the Duke's renewed loyalty to his wife.

The narrative places such high value on loyalty that God blesses the Duke and his wife with an heir after the Duke renews his loyalty to her and she demonstrates continued loyalty to him. After the Duke and the servant fake the Duke's death, the Duke's wife moves to a separate house, away from the young companion who had manipulated and, she believes, killed her husband. The companion, assuming the Duke's title and property,

wastes no time in fabricating a disagreement with her and takes her estate while she uses what jewels she has left to buy a house alone in the woods (36:3-4). Her husband comes upon his wife's house, and the two reconcile. The narrator's description of the reconciliation is ambiguous, but tender, an opportunity to reveal the compassion with which the wife treats the husband as well as a demonstration of the couple finding a space where they *act without*: “. . . having yet some Jewels left her, she bought a little house in a thick and desert wood, where she was not long before I came unto her, discovering my selfe to both our equall passions of joy and sorrow. Privatly we there continued many yeares” (36:3-6). The Duke has nothing to offer his wife according to patriarchal traditions when he comes to her house in the woods. He is penniless, homeless, without connections and they do not yet have a child together. He still loves the young companion, so it is not a renewed commitment to fidelity or constant love that precedes the reconciliation. Wroth removes the patriarchal gender constructs that support the patriarchal norm from the relationship the Duke and his wife have when they reconcile, resulting in the reconciliation of a couple outside of the patriarchal paradigm in what Malabou might consider new territory. The narrative never reveals the details of the reconciliation, just the “equall passions of joy and sorrow” that both feel. What is left between the Duke and his wife is the shared experience of the usurped that binds them in loyalty to each other; loyalty that is given God's “unexpected blessing” of an heir (36:7).

The Duke and his young companion are both disloyal in ways that create enormous repercussions for themselves and those whose lives they touch. Yet the Duke is dealt with much more gently than his young companion, begging the question why. Why does Wroth choose a horrible death for the young companion and a quiet, respectable,

almost admirable end for the Duke? The difference between the two is that the Duke does not seem to be intentionally cruel and disloyal while the young companion's disloyalty is cold and calculating. The Duke is driven by passion, and his feelings for the young companion appear to be genuine and unchanging over time. The young companion, however, is driven by greed and shows no remorse for his disloyalty. The Duke's loyalty to his companion, the renewed loyalty to his wife, and the wife's loyalty to the Duke are valued regardless of deviation from gender norms. The young companion is disloyal to the Duke, is ultimately ousted, and in a dark end in which the young companion never repents of his betrayal he finds "pride [began] swelling him so with scorne of his fall, as he burst and dyed" (37:5-6). In the narrative the young companion is treated harshly and morbidly for his disloyalty and the Duke is treated gently, valued for his restored loyalty.

The Duke is allowed to determine his own fate, choosing to live as a hermit because he continues to grieve his relationship with his young companion after his restored loyalty to his wife. The narrative treats the Duke's feelings for his companion with tenderness and respect while the consequences of continued disloyalty endure in the companion's death. At the moment the title and lands are restored the Duke immediately passes them on to his daughter, reporting that he was never able to recover his "former losse," which might lead a reader to believe that the Duke could not bear to face his subjects after betraying them or that his subjects and family would not accept his leadership (37:8). However, in the lines immediately following the death of his male companion the Duke reports he was never able to recover from his "former losse," pointing more directly to the possibility that it is the loss of his male companion from which he cannot recover:

and there to ende his dayes: which were not long, pride swelling him so with scorne of his fall, as he burst and dyed. The Dukedome after this sentence was restored to me: but truely, I was not able so to recover my former losse, . . . I returned to this place, where like a Hermit still I live . . . and the Cave I rest in, shall bee all the Courts or Pallaces that these old eyes shall ever now behold. (37:5-8, 23-26)

Regardless of the Duke's deviation from gender norms, his restored loyalty is valued and the young companion's disloyalty is punished. The Duke finds new territory, the cave, where he can avoid the patriarchal expectations of courtly life and live with the loss of his companion.

Nereana is a female ruler whose pride disrupts the loyalty necessary for a successful sovereign. A reader must piece Nereana's story together over the expanse of two hundred pages, making it easy to miss its central discourse about loyalty. At first, she leaves her realm, abandoning her people to pursue Prince Steriamus. Along the way, she is mistaken for a nymph and molested by a madman. She returns home to her country, Stalamine, only to be displaced as sovereign by her sister and imprisoned by her subjects. The preceding incidents are the result of Nereana's exaggerated sense of pride and arrogance. Nereana is capable of being a loyal sovereign and is restored to her throne once her pride is replaced by humility, but the story ends after the narrator speaks directly to the reader. The narrator uses indefinite pronouns to include all people rather than singling out the masculine or the feminine: "thus may you see that *none* can run so far that shall not have some time to returne, nor *any* how much soever condemn'd but may live to be fit of commiseration, and respect" (496:24-26; emphasis mine). The moments

in which the narrator speaks directly to the reader are rare in *Urania I*. Hannay's biography and the work of Josephine Roberts, the editor of *Urania I*, established that Wroth was not a novice writer, but proficient in both prose and sonnet forms, so it is unlikely that a moment in which the narrator speaks directly to the reader is an accident or an afterthought. More likely is the possibility that what the narrator is saying is meant to be the resolution to Nereana's story, the final words, and the final words are gender-multiple. The events leading up to the narrator's speech offer many examples of Nereana's exaggerated sense of pride and arrogance; pride that results in her disloyalty to her subjects and her subjects' subsequent disloyalty to their sovereign. Yet the narrator's point is not limited only to female sovereigns, suggesting Nereana's story is an example for any sovereign.

Nereana is even disloyal to her geography, abandoning her realm to pursue Steriamus, but the narrative's focus is on Nereana becoming humble so that she may return a loyal ruler. In *Cherished Torment*, Sheila T. Cavanagh places responsibility for the suffering Nereana endures squarely on her geographical disloyalty (64). While it is accurate that Nereana suffers and also that she abandons her lands to pursue her love, it is possible that Nereana needs to travel to achieve the humility necessary for her to return to her land and subjects as a loyal and respected ruler. According to the narrator, "this experience, though late, is most profitable to Princes" (496:29-30). Cavanagh's reading hinges on the premise that Nereana is meant to represent the consequences of a woman who travels; while travel by men is acceptable in the text, women are punished for geographical disloyalty (64). A reading that allows gender multiplicity, however, one that allows the possibility that Wroth is speaking to a broader issue--loyalty regardless of

gender--reveals that it is neither Nereana's status as a woman nor her travel that devalues her in the narrative, but her pride, which existed before she travelled to pursue her love. It is through the leveling of that pride when she travels and, again, when she returns home and is imprisoned for quite some time, that the value afforded loyalty is revealed regardless of Nereana's adherence to gender norms.

The next few pages will examine some of the pivotal moments in the text in which Nereana's pride precedes her disloyalty and in which humility precedes her ability to be loyal to her subjects. In turn her subjects demonstrate loyalty by restoring her to her throne. Reminiscent of the Duke who was focused solely on the object of his affection, Nereana is focused solely on pursuing and winning over Steriamus, but it is pride rather than love that drives her to abandon her subjects and pursue a lover. Nereana tries to win Steriamus's affection when he and Amphilanthus are on her island at Stalamine (192:18). Steriamus refuses and chastises her. Nereana ignores his reprimand for boasting and continues saying that any man should be honored to have a princess such as her.

Steriamus responds:

I am ... truly ashamed to see such impudent pride in the sexe most to be reverenced: but to let you know, that you too farre exceede the limits of truth and understanding, by vainely over-esteeming your selfe, I will assure you that I love a Princesse ... this is a woman, and indeed the perfectest, while you serve for the contrarie. (192:31-38)

This is not the first time, nor will it be the last, that Nereana is ridiculed for her pride and arrogance. Subsequently, she vows to see the princess Pamphilia of whom Steriamus is speaking. Pamphilia calls Nereana "Knight-like" and "matchlesse" in her pursuit of

Steriamus (194:22, 27). Pamphilia's descriptions are meant to ridicule Nereana for her arrogance, drawing attention to the fact that Nereana is not a knight, but a queen who has forsaken her loyalty to many subjects because her pride will not allow her to accept Steriamus's refusal. Comparing Nereana to a knight alludes to the gender multiplicity of the female ruler and, simultaneously, reprimands her pride.

Not yet humbled to the point necessary to return home a loyal sovereign, Nereana is chafed by Pamphilia's comments and again takes to the sea to pursue Steriamus:

"These words were spoken so, as, though proud Nereana were nettled with them . . . inwardly working upon her pride-fild heart" (194:33-36). Later, Nereana's ship is thrown off course by a storm and lands on the island of Cecily (195:37). She leaves her servants so that she may talk and act as she pleases in the woods. The narrator discloses Nereana's interior dialogue, linking the loyalty that must be shared between sovereign and subject to create successful rule:

One while she curse'd her love, then dislike of her folly, for adventuring,  
and rashly leaving her Country: she raild at the uncareful people who  
permitted her to have her fond desires without limiting her power, but that  
she check'd again, 'for,' she said, 'rather would I be thus miserable, then  
not absolute.' (196:17-21)

Rejected by her love, reprimanded by Pamphilia, lost in the woods on Cecily, Nereana is ruled by her pride and admits that she would rather be a miserable, failed ruler than humble herself to share the responsibility for successful rule with her subjects. Nereana's pride continues to separate her from her land and her subjects, revealing her pride to be the root cause of her disloyalty.

Nereana's pride predicates disloyalty and devalues her character in the narrative. The narrator makes the point clear when Nereana is being molested by a madman in the woods-- "Shee whose pride could hardly permit the embracing, if Steriamus had offered it, before she loved him" (197:15). When she is molested by a madman, tied to a tree, stripped down to "one little petticoate," the implication is that she is being stripped of her pride, but not so with Nereana (197:42). Her pride is like armor that the narrator and characters must chip away again and again to mold a more humble sovereign capable of being loyal to her subjects. So even the madman "sadly went from her, leaving her, whose intolerable pride was such, as shee would not let him stay so much as in her presence, though after shee wished for him, and would gladly have had his conversation, pardoning his meane estate and madnesse" (200:333-36). Nereana experiences the humility necessary to acknowledge dependence on another human being only after suffering famine and exposure to the elements on Cecily. Her suffering "wrought kindness in her," and the narrative leaves Nereana in this place for over one hundred and thirty pages. She is rescued by Perissus who happens upon her in the woods. No longer helpless, her pride swells again (336:36). All other themes seem overshadowed by pride until Nereana returns to Stalamine. The reunion with her subjects, though difficult, reveals that subjects and sovereign must demonstrate loyalty to each other.

Her subjects' fear of Nereana's retribution for their disloyalty leads them to have her imprisoned upon her return. In her absence Nereana's subjects had merely accepted her sister's sovereignty but upon Nereana's return they "commit a fault unpardonable" by overthrowing her and putting her sister on the throne. Nereana's subjects imprison her because her "pride could not gaine obedience, nor scorne, command, but what most urged

against her, was the political fear they apprehended of her revenge on them, who had given themselves to another Governess in her absence” (337:39-42). Nereana’s pride continually disrupts the contract of loyalty between sovereign and subjects. Book II ends with Nereana’s imprisonment: “Now Nereana where is thy greatness, but in miserie . . . and where thy subjection, but in thy brave Stalamina . . . punishment justly allotted for such excessive over-weening” (338:4-8). “Over-weening” in early modern usage means “self-conceited” or “arrogant” (*OED*). Yet the narrator promises to resume Nereana’s story and does so over one hundred pages later.

When Nereana’s story picks up again, the conflicts between her and her subjects are resolved because her pride has finally been leveled by her imprisonment and loyalty is possible: “and all was made up with a kind and gracious conclusion, she by her poore living, and neglect being now invested in so staid an habitation of gravity, as she was fit for the honour they recalled her to” (496:18-21). Readers might interpret Nereana’s failure to gain Steriamus’s love, her abandonment of her realm, and the loneliness and madness she chooses over limited rule as demonstrating that women should be static. But Wroth is not a novice writer, so the assumption might be, instead, that she means to focus the reader’s attention on the moral of Nereana’s story by having the narrator speak directly to the reader:

thus may you see that none can run so far that shall not have some time to returne, nor any how much soever condemn’d but may live to be fit of commiseration, and respect; this was verified in her, and she deserved their due restoring her, proving an excellent Governess, and brave Lady, being able to overrule her old passions, and by them to judge how to favor,

licence and curb others, and this experience, though late, is most profitable to Princes. (496)

Speaking in first person, the narrator again uses indefinite pronouns, “none” and “any,” intentionally inclusive and gender multiple.

The Duke and Nereana are described to be a male and female, respectively, but this binary does not limit their gender multiplicity, satisfying Malabou’s belief that “There are not just two genders there is a multiplicity of genders. Masculine and feminine can refer to several of these gender identities at once, without referring to originary anatomical or social givens” (6). Looking for gender multiplicity rather than gender binary is the goal of a reading that applies Malabou’s theory. That is not to say that gender binary does not exist in the text but that if one reads looking for multiplicity then the moments in which binaries exist are not the norm, while the ongoing, larger discourses, such as agency and loyalty, reveal gender multiplicity. Gender multiplicity and loyalty are inextricably linked in the Duke’s and Nereana’s stories. The Duke’s gender multiplicity--revealed in the disloyalty that his relationship with a same-sex companion creates--also reveals the subversion of the traditional patriarchy that demands an heir and supports family and subjects. Pamphilia compares Nereana to a knight, mocking Nereana’s pride and arrogance, but she is never judged for being a female ruler, only a prideful, disloyal ruler. The narrator uses gender multiple pronouns when ending Nereana’s story with a speech directed, in first person, to the reader. The work supports the value of loyalty while allowing gender multiplicity without negative judgment toward characters who are gender multiple. It is the character’s loyalty that is valued in place of adherence to gender norms.

Not only does Wroth's treatment of the Duke and Neareana focus the discourse on gender multiplicity rather than adherence to gender norms, her constructions of gender, in this case, serve as examples of arriving in new territory because the reader's attention is on the resolution of conflict in gender multiple characters rather than punishment for deviation from gender norms. Wroth's treatment of agency accomplished the same task, and using the examples of a female sovereign and a same-sex male relationship that are restored when their loyalty is restored rather than restoration of gender norms further emphasizes the value of one's adherence to loyalty.

## CHAPTER IV

### GENDER MULTIPLICITY AND CONSTANCY

Constancy in the way that Wroth uses it in *Urania I* signifies steadfast attachment to an individual (*OED*). Different from loyalty, which signifies trust and the fulfillment of social contracts between friends, family members, sovereigns, and subjects, Wroth typically refers to constancy in romantic relationships. In this work, constancy specifically related to love and fidelity is valued but, unlike agency and loyalty, the expectations and value afforded constancy are treated differently in accordance with the beliefs of individual characters in the narrative.

As a prose romance, *Urania I* presents few characters who are able to remain constant. After the opening episode in which Urania finds Perissus in the cave and urges him to avenge Limena, the group travels by ship and lands on the island of Cyprus where the Throne of Love is situated. When Urania's party enters the palace that houses the Throne of Love, the reader is made privy to the central role that constancy plays in the romance. The Throne of Love is comprised of three towers. Upon the first a carven image of Cupid points to the second. A carven image of Venus on the second points to the third. On the third and final tower a carven image of Constancy holds the keys to love:

[Venus is] directing to the third Towre, before which, in all dainty riches, and rich delicacy, was the figure of Constancy, holding in her hand the Keyes of the Pallace: which shewed, that place was not to be open to all,

but to few possessed with that vertue. They all beheld this place with great wonder. (48:20-23)

Urania's party accidentally drinks from the river of desire that surrounds the palace before entering the Throne of Love. The group enters the first tower filled with desire, but none make it to the tower of constancy. They are trapped in the towers of love and desire until Pamphilia's constancy frees them.

When Pamphilia and Amphilanthus attempt the Throne of Love together Pamphilia's constancy enables the pair to conquer the Throne of Love. Then, Urania and her party are released from the enchantment:

Both . . . passed to the last Tower, where *Constancy* stood holding the keyes, which Pamphilia tooke; at which instant *Constancy* vanished, as metamorphosing her self into her breast; then did the excellent Queene deliver them to Amphilanthus . . . a voice heard, which delivered these words: 'Loyallest, and therefore most incomparable Pamphilia, release the Ladies, who must to your worth, with all other of your sexe, yield right preheminance: and thou Amphilanthus, the valliantest and worthiest of thy sexe, give freedome to the Knights, who with all other, must confesse thee matchlesse. (169:31-170:4)

Pamphilia embodies constancy while the other characters, except Amphilanthus, never make it to that tower. The enchantment is conquered, but constancy is transferred to Pamphilia, who struggles with it the remainder of the romance.

Scholars understand constancy to be a traditionally female virtue, an understanding that complicates trying to explain the gender multiplicity revealed in

constancy. A reading that assumes gender multiplicity resolves the complication when applied in place of a traditional reading that looks for binaries and assumes victim feminism. In her biography Hannay reflects the complication when she refers to an essay by Mary Trull that claims that “In *Urania*, as in Arthurian romances, the traditional female virtue of chastity is largely replaced by constancy to a freely chosen love” (qtd. Hannay 189). In *Urania I*, however, constancy is not treated solely as a female virtue. Below I will suggest that it is an issue with which both male and female characters contend. Furthermore, I will show that Urania, one of the two main characters in the romance, declares that adherence to constancy may not always be virtuous. Following one of Amphilanthus’s inconstant episodes, Pamphilia and Urania engage in a conversation about constancy that borders on being confrontational and that serves as the baseline for exploring gender multiplicity revealed in constancy. Each offers different beliefs and expectations about constancy. This chapter will discuss varying degrees of constancy represented in the debate as well as those evident in Amphilanthus and Perissus. Taken together, these reveal that in *Urania I* constancy is not a traditionally female virtue, but a virtue with which characters must contend regardless of gender. Wroth moved past *acting as if* and *acting together*, and arrived in new territory where her application of constancy allows individualized concepts of constancy to coexist in characters that are gender multiple.

As chapters one and two reveal, a character is valued according to adherence to agency or loyalty, but such is not the case with constancy. A character may be inconstant and highly esteemed. The narrator and other characters make no conclusive judgment as to which belief about constancy is superior. To complicate matters, Amphilanthus,

Pamphilia's love, is inconstant yet generally valued over all other men such as Perissus, who is respected for his constancy. According to the narrator and the characters, constancy is not indicative of the value of a woman and inconstancy is not excused in men, as the traditional model of constancy as a female virtue might indicate. Urania goes so far as to claim that constancy can be a vice. The sheer number of both masculine and feminine characters that contend with constancy and inconstancy demonstrates that constancy is not a merely female virtue in *Urania I*.

Both Pamphilia and Urania are privileged before, during, and after the two beliefs about constancy are articulated, making it difficult to value one over the other.

Pamphilia's reaction to Amphilanthus's inconstancy is so severe that a servant screams when Pamphilia momentarily loses consciousness (462:4; 467:10-15). In this episode Urania tries to encourage Pamphilia to pull herself together, reminding Pamphilia of her "Masculine spirit" and of her subjects who would not be confident in her rule if they saw her lamenting so violently over love (468:18-19). Pamphilia responds, saying that she cannot let go of her constancy because it is the demonstration of true love.

Urania believes that when one finds that a paramour to whom one has been constant does not reciprocate, one should not mourn because:

all is yet well, you may with care, recover what is something touched, and in time see his repentance which you may pity, or bee more wise, and respect in stead of loving him, who how worthy in all else, deserves not one of these teares, if false to you, let him goe and rejoyce, you see his imperfections before you were tyed to them. (469:10-13)

According to Urania, no love is worth suffering for as Pamphilia suffers, if that love is

inconstant. Moreover, Urania believes that Pamphilia should feel grateful if she finds out that her paramour is false before she is “tyed” to him. Urania’s constancy is largely based on the behavior of the beloved, not her own feelings or desires. Urania’s belief about constancy partly contradicts what Hannay says about Urania’s constancy: “Wroth, however, presents not one but two strong female voices, Pamphilia on passive constancy and Urania on female agency” (190). Because Urania’s constancy is dependent on outside influences, it is partly passive, not active. Her constancy is partly active, however, in that she expresses that constancy is a choice and that one is not tied to a person because of feelings. She believes that steadfast constancy is a “fruitlesse thing” and that, if a paramour is not constant, to continue to be constant to that paramour is a vice, leaving the person who remains steadfast “free to leave or choose again where more staidness may be found” (*Urania I* 470:29, 34). Urania’s feelings of love are conditional, based on those of the beloved. Urania chooses to be constant if her paramour is constant. She believes that one betrays oneself by remaining constant when the paramour is not. Pamphilia disregards Amphilanthus’s inconstancy and Urania admonishes her:

Tis pittie . . . that ever that fruitlesse thing Constancy was taught you as a vertue, since for vertues sake you will love it . . . but understand, this vertue hath limits to hold it in, being a vertue, but thus that it is a vice in them that breake it, but those with whom it is broken, are by the breach free to leave or choose againe where more staidness may be found; besides tis a dangerous thing to hold that opinion, which in time will prove flat heresie. (470:34-35)

Urania is taking the position that responding to inconstancy with constancy and calling it

virtuous “will prove flat heresie.” Urania demonstrates her gender multiplicity in that she is both active and passive. She not only defies the gender norm that prescribes constancy as female, but goes one step further asserting that it is heretical to even hold the opinion that constancy can be categorized as a virtue once the paramour is inconstant. In other words, Urania’s declaration frees both the feminine and the masculine from adherence to constancy. She does not differentiate between women and men, but instead says that “it is a vice in them that breake it, but those with whom it is broken, are by the breach free to leave.” Once again Wroth uses indefinite pronouns--“them” and “those”--as a device to allow an opening to gender multiplicity. It is the same device she used when the narrator addressed the speaker directly about restoration and loyalty at the end of Nereana’s story, using the indefinite pronouns “none” and “any.”

In contrast, Pamphilia’s interpretation of constancy is based on the claim that constancy is a byproduct of true love. When Urania encourages Pamphilia to consider that love should be treated as “a good child well used, flattred, an insolent thing,” (470:1) the latter follows with this response:

Thus you see it is truth, and such truth as only shall have end by miserable  
dayes conclusion. To leave him for being false, would shew my love was  
not for his sake, but mine owne, that because he loved me, I therefore  
loved him, but when hee leaves I can doe so to. O no deere Cousen I loved  
him for himself, and would have loved him had hee not loved mee, and  
will love though he dispise me; this is true love. (470: 16-21)

According to Pamphilia, true love results in constancy as the natural demonstration of the paramour’s genuineness and is not dependent on the constancy of the paramour; true love

is, necessarily, constant. If she chooses to “leave or choose again,” she is betraying her own truth. Pamphilia’s definition or experience in love is the opposite of Urania’s, who can separate herself from love based on the actions of the paramour. Therefore, for Pamphilia, love is another example of agency; it is self-determined. Her continued constancy contradicts the agency in other areas of her life, if, and only if, she betrays it. Remaining constant, she is remaining true to herself. In order to be untrue she states exactly what it is that would need to happen “if I let in that worthlesse humour change, which I can never doe till I can change my selfe, and have new creation and another soule; for this is true and loyall” (459:13-15). Pamphilia is attempting to make Urania understand that constancy is not a choice. Her argument is hard to accept because she demonstrates agency in her freedom to choose in almost every other aspect. She is a ruler, she travels freely, she is free to determine her own marital status, and she is quicker to action than a knight in pursuing Amphilanthus when he faces of danger. Yet she tells Urania that it is not within her ability to let go of an inconstant paramour. Constancy is either Pamphilia’s most esteemed characteristic or it is her most pervasive character defect. The judgment about constancy is never resolved in this episode or in the narrative, but Pamphilia and Urania, who demonstrate gender multiplicity, articulate two very different beliefs. The narrative as a whole treats constancy as valuable, but the virtue does not indicate a character’s overall value, female or male.

Amphilanthus’s primary defect is his inconstancy, yet he is admired and esteemed throughout the text. In fact, the ongoing conflict between the work’s heroine and her paramour is his inconstancy. Amphilanthus’s name actually means “the lover of two” and Pamphilia’s means “all-loving” (300:22). In a moment of privacy Amphilanthus walks

along a riverbank where he is able to be “bold in speech” and speak about his status as an inconstant lover:

who could have thought inconstancy a waight, if not to presse me on to more delight? Left I till now any wherein change brought not unspeakable content? When I tooke Antissia, thought I not I was happy in the change? When I before had altered from and to that love, did it not bring full consent of blisse? But now I have changed, and for, and to the best, [Pamphilia] alas, how am I troubled? How afflicted? How perplexed? Constancie I see, is the onely perfect vertue, and the contrary, the truest fault, which like sinnes, intices one still on, of purpose to leave one.  
(135:9-16)

Amphilanthus equates inconstancy to sin, enticing the constant individual to leave one lover for another. In the same episode he asks that the powers of love make him constant to Pamphilia and almost immediately follows the request by admitting that if Pamphilia does not return his affections he will turn his eyes to another: “Love hath now fram’d me wholly to thy Lawes, command then, here I breath but to thy love, from which, when I doe swarve, let me love unrequited” (135:32-34). Amphilanthus does not try to lie to himself about his ability to remain constant. He wants to be constant and interprets inconstancy as a sin, but he is honest with himself about his inability to be constant. Yet he is excused for his inconstancy and remains esteemed by most characters and the narrator. The exceptions to those who esteem him are some of the women to whom he is inconstant, such as Antissia whom he names in the quote above. She plots to kill him. But for the most part, Amphilanthus is esteemed more highly than other characters in the text.

The esteem Amphilanthus enjoys in the romance is almost comical considering his inconstancy and considering that the heroine's suffering is the direct result of his inconstancy. Toward the end of his walk by the river, he arrives at a fountain. The narrator's opinion of Amphilanthus in this episode, and the opinion that is repeated throughout the text, is that "those who are able to comprehend his [Amphilanthus's] worth, and understanding; such may expresse his passions, all else admire, and admiringly esteeme so incomparable a Prince" (136:22-24). Each time Amphilanthus is referred to as esteemed or incomparable, the justification is missing from the text. The reader is somewhat prepared for Amphilanthus's false esteem earlier when he was ironically handed the keys to the Throne of Love by Pamphilia when her constancy ended the enchantment. The narrator, Pamphilia, other princesses and princes seem to unquestioningly afford Amphilanthus a great deal of value and respect over other characters, forcing the reader to accept Amphilanthus's value without evidence that he is superior to other characters, especially in his constancy.

Hannay offers a biographical theory that might explain Amphilanthus's value in the romance despite his inconstancy. As noted in the introduction, Wroth was reported to have had a love affair with William Herbert of Pembroke who was often compared to Amphilanthus. If the reader accepts that Pamphilia and Amphilanthus are avatars for Mary Wroth and William Herbert, then the opinions of the characters and the narrator make more sense. William Herbert was a learned man, appointed chancellor of Oxford in 1617, a patron of the arts, one of few to remain favored by King James, a renowned public speaker and voice for the Protestants at court but according to one of William Herbert's contemporaries the historian Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, "he was

immoderately given up to women . . . he sacrificed himself, his precious time, and much of his fortune” (qtd. Hannay 193). If Amphilanthus was an avatar for William Herbert and Wroth never remarried because of her constancy toward him, then Amphilanthus’s esteem, despite his inconstancy, may be fueled by the esteem the inconstant William Herbert was afforded socially, at court and from Wroth.

The rarity of constancy in any gender makes Perissus’s constancy as a male stand out in the work. His is the opposite of Amphilanthus’s inconstancy and serves as an example of the demonstration that constancy is not solely a female virtue. Pamphilia entreats Limena to tell tales of the varieties of possibilities of love, believing Limena will have positive tales of love because Limena and Perissus enjoy happiness. Limena disappoints Pamphilia telling her that Perissus is the exception to other men. Other men “never knew but the end of their own wills, which are to delight (only Perissus excepted)” (229:14-16). Elsewhere in the romance the prophetess Melissea refers to Limena’s and Perissus’s constancy when she foretells of “the constant being of their happy dayes” (191:3-4). Amphilanthus, the symbol of inconstancy, jousts none other than Perissus in disguise as the Knight of Victory, presumably the Knight of Victory because Perissus is victorious over inconstancy and Amphilanthus is not (167: 22). However, Amphilanthus wins the contest, perhaps symbolizing that inconstancy prevails in Wroth’s version of romance. Perissus symbolizes a constant male but Amphilanthus wins the joust, maintaining his status over other men regardless of his inconstancy.

By Pamphilia’s definition Urania is inconstant because she changed her affection from Parselius, discussed in chapter one, to Steriamus. Pamphilia, by Urania’s definition, turns constancy into a vice rather than a virtue. Amphilanthus describes inconstancy as a

sin. Limena believes all men, save her own Perissus, succumb to their own “delights.” Perissus remains constant and loses a joust to Amphilanthus while the inconstant Amphilanthus is made Holy Roman Emperor (441:29). No pattern of value or privilege emerges regarding constancy as is the case with agency and loyalty, but like agency and loyalty constancy is a gender multiple issue in *Urania I*. Gender multiplicity revealed in constancy is, arguably, the most important revelation of gender multiplicity in Wroth’s work because constancy is the central theme of the romance. Reading the struggles with constancy that the characters have with an understanding of gender multiplicity allows a reader to fully engage with all of the possibilities of the characters’ beliefs about constancy without limiting interpretations based on a binary reading. With that in mind, Pamphilia’s response to her constancy and Amphilanthus’s inconstancy demonstrate Malabou’s three stages and arrival in new territory:

Some dayes were thus passed . . . and soone after [Pamphilia] arriv’d in [the Kingdom of ] Pamphilia, where no sooner the newes of her arrival was spread; but the people from all parts came to see her, and joy in her presence, while she joyed in nothing, nor communed with any but her owne sad selfe, which she cal’d her losse, and passions for it: the saddest places were the most pleasing to her, the solitariest Caves or Rockes her chiefe abiding places, yet she lost not her selfe; for her government continued just and brave, like the Lady she was, wherein she shewed her heart was not to be stirr’d, though her private fortunes shooke round about her. (484:17-26)

Though heartbroken by Amphilanthus's inconstancy, Pamphilia remains in control of her sovereignty, exemplifying a gender-multiple character that *acts without*. Her constancy and his inconstancy do not determine her ability to rule, demonstrating that constancy, passion, and competent rule are not mutually exclusive. Constancy to an inconstant lover that Urania considers a vice is managed by Pamphilia so that she remains true to herself and loyal to her subjects. In Pamphilia, Wroth presents a formula for a female ruler that is outside of the traditional territory in which a woman, expected to be silent, chaste, and obedient, competently serves in a position of power without disengaging from emotion. If Pamphilia either changed or set aside her feelings for Amphilanthus in order to be a "just and brave" ruler, then the character would satisfy expectations in which emotion associated with the feminine must be denied in order to rule successfully, but Pamphilia does not deny emotion. In Wroth's estimation, a female ruler claims her emotions and her sovereignty, a situation not common in early modern literature. The combination of traditional feminine and masculine traits that Pamphilia exhibits throughout the narrative and in the narrator's description above offer just one example of Wroth's developing a character that *acts without*. Pamphilia demonstrates that successful rule is not solely feminine or masculine. A combination of the traditional feminine and masculine traits results in successful rule, depending on the way the individual manages responses to agency, loyalty, and constancy.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

This thesis shows that Catherine Malabou's philosophy in *Changing Difference* illuminates a reading of Mary Wroth's *Urania I* by developing a new territory that offers an alternative to a gender binary. A reading that looks for ways to value characters that does not first value the categories *female* or *male* allows for individual difference to exist and evaluates instead the behavior of a character in relation to the situation the character faces; such a reading of *Urania I* privileges agency, loyalty, and constancy rather than adherence to gender norms.

One benefit of applying Malabou's philosophy to *Urania I* is the pedagogical implication. In a university classroom academics face an unknown number of gender combinations. Offering a reading of *Urania I* using the overlay developed for this thesis to explore gender multiplicity opens up the opportunity to promote gender equity in the classroom while teaching an early modern work. The relevance of gender equity will not fall on deaf ears. An article entitled "Why Gender Equity Stalled" (*nytimes.com*, Feb. 2013), written by Stephanie Coontz appeared recently in the *New York Times*. The article discusses that in some cases of gender equity females and males now have an equal stake in the outcome, as opposed to sixty years ago when gender equity primarily referenced females. Another article, somewhat more disturbing than the title of the recent *NY Times* article, is one found in *Middle School Journal*, entitled "Considerations for Gender

Friendly Classrooms” (Kommer). Kommer’s article was published in 2006; the year the current incoming university freshman class was entering middle school and receiving the intellectually limiting strategies promoted in the article. While the title sounds positive, the content is anything but inclusive: “Using a strategy that might be ‘male friendly’ works with the strengths of the males *and*, at the same time, provides opportunities for females to strengthen a weak area, and vice versa” (44). Kommer repeatedly identifies strategies that are female or male without identifying that students may fall anywhere along a continuum or that students who present with female or male sex markers may perform differently than the expectations he expresses. I believe that his intention was to offer solutions to the disparity in gender equity; however, because he strategizes from an understanding of gender as binary he joins the ranks of educators and academics that miss the important nuances and implications of gender multiplicity, reinforcing the intellectual limitations for the individual person that binaries propagate.

Offering a reading of an early modern work using a gender multiple overlay creates a frame of reference for a contemporary reader to understand an early modern work, as well as contemporary society, resulting in a more gender equitable reading if the focus is not on identifying only differences and binaries. As the chapters in this thesis demonstrate, Wroth bridges the binary gap when gender multiple characters deal with the same sorts of situations related to agency, loyalty, and constancy. Applying Malabou’s three stages, readers have the opportunity to consider the stages in relation to the work and simultaneously in relation to the beliefs the readers bring to the work. In other words, as readers look for the ways in which an author and characters may or may not *act as if*, *act together*, or *act without*, they may acknowledge possible fallacies in their own

understanding of an era or genre of literature as well as develop critical thinking skills.

This thesis only touches on the surface of what is possible in creating an overlay from Malabou's philosophy of gender multiplicity for identifying gender multiplicity in early modern works. A more thorough exploration of specific characters and episodes in *Urania I*, as well as application to *Urania II*, will improve the creation of an overlay that identifies gender multiplicity and provide a system of application for works other than Mary Wroth's. Considering, for example, the application of a gender-multiple reading using Malabou's philosophy in male authored canonical works creates an entirely new set of problems and questions about expectations and goals related to looking for gender multiplicity in early modern works. The question arises as to whether or not gender multiplicity is present; if so, to what degree? Will assuming gender multiplicity in any early modern work reveal "new territory" for male or female authors whose works have been part of the canon for centuries? And can a gender-multiple reading help students of literature enjoy, interpret, and embrace *Urania I & II* more readily? I believe that a gender-multiple reading can help students understand themselves, their peers, their own and others' cultures through the study of literature while developing critical thinking skills. With that, I will conclude with a quote from Malabou that extends a conversation about gender multiplicity and also seems to relate to Wroth's construction of some of her characters in *Urania I*:

We must rethink the relation of philosophy and science today, not in order to isolate a "feminine" . . . but rather to show, always according to the hypothesis of an originary transformability of presence and nature, that the place of sex has moved. My interest in contemporary neurobiology has led

me to discover the emphasis of researchers on the emotional brain . . . .

Today the brain is becoming the place of affects, passions, and drives, delocalizing “sexuality” . . . . The space of play between (anatomic) sex and gender, between the so-called “biological essence” and “cultural construction” of identity has profoundly changed meaning. (137-138)

I hope that readers will see that some play exists in the space between characters’ anatomic sex and gender in *Urania I* when applying a gender-multiple reading.

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## **VITA**

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