

REVISIONING EARLY MODERN FEMINISM THROUGH PAMPHILIA
IN LADY MARY WROTH'S *THE FIRST PART OF*
THE COUNTESS OF MONTGOMERY'S
URANIA

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Rose A. Verstynen, B.A.

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REVISIONING EARLY MODERN FEMINISM THROUGH PAMPHILIA
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Committee Members Approved:

Daniel T. Lochman, Chair

Joseph R. Falocco

Nancy J. Grayson

Approved:

J. Michael Willoughby
Dean of the Graduate College

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Rose Ann Verstynen

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INTRODUCTION

On the surface, *The First Part of the Countess of Montgomery's Urania* by Lady Mary Wroth appears to be a picturesque example of Renaissance society. Many of the elements we've come to expect historically, as well as literarily, are present therein: royal courts, chivalry, tournaments, enchantments, romance, beauty, and, presiding above all, patriarchal rule. The latter becomes immediately apparent in the first episode during which the shepherdess Urania encounters the peasant Perissus in a cave lamenting the loss of his love, Limena, to Lord Philargus. As his story explains, Perissus, Limena's servant, had fallen in love with Limena who was shortly thereafter required by her father to marry Philargus so he could help fight burgeoning wars in their country. This example of aristocratic patriarchal marriage, as well as other types of arranged marriages, fits well within the modern concept of Renaissance society, a device Wroth may have used to ease her contemporary audience into a plot that frequently strays from convention.

The Countess of Montgomery's Urania was the first published romance written by an Englishwoman. This alone is a substantial deviation from convention and likely contributes to other unconventional aspects of the novel. Literary moments such as this, when a woman appropriates a male dominated genre, force retrospective confrontation between modern theories (here feminist theory) and older texts. During my primary

reading of *Urania*, I subconsciously felt that tension because I was reading with the very unsophisticated perspective that I would only find women who were naïvely subject to patriarchal law without revolt or question—as if this text would simply regurgitate a decidedly masculine perspective of Renaissance society. Unlike Stephen Greenblatt’s idea in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, as a first year graduate student I read *Urania* searching for differences rather than similarities (6-7). I quickly learned that this was a dangerous endeavor in which the yielded results only revealed the modern reader’s bias, namely my own. I found myself rationalizing Pamphilia’s use of logic and pragmatism. If Pamphilia appeared to use logic in a conversation with Antissia, then surely it was only under the guise of courtly behavior and not actually logic. If she seemed to possess more agency than other women then it was surely because she was born privileged. At every turn, I was actively denying Pamphilia the consideration I’d gladly give to any modern female character and all for the simple reason that she predated modern feminism. Yet even this negative perspective forced me to interact with the text in a productive way. Soon I realized that Pamphilia’s, as well as other women’s, acceptance of patriarchal law mainly existed at a superficial level and that something interesting and unexpected was happening below the threshold of awareness.

Even though *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania* is a relatively new addition to the canon of English Literature, having been out of print from 1621 until 1995, it has been scrutinized from many angles and very frequently through a feminist lens, a seemingly natural result of Wroth’s unique position in the genre. Producing new ideas on this subject has been no small undertaking. Here, I took heart in Greenblatt’s words: “It is

everywhere evident in this book that the questions I ask of my material and indeed the very nature of this material are shaped by the questions I ask of myself. I do not shrink from these impurities” (5). By synthesizing scholarship from those more versed in early modern literature than myself—Margaret Hanney, Stephen Greenblatt, Jacqueline Miller, Josephine Roberts, Kathryn Schwarz, et al.—I hope to cultivate a natural way to discuss feminist themes in *The First Part of the Countess of Montgomery’s Urania* while contributing to the ongoing conversation about *Urania* and early modern texts.

There are inherent problems with trying to discuss feminist themes in older texts. Throughout my analysis, I will attempt to be wary of two extreme possibilities: the application of feminist theory too passively or too aggressively. When feminist theory is applied too passively, the terms used to describe feminism are frequently too loosely defined, often on the basis that the writer and readers of the time did not have the language to discuss such theory. Applying feminist theory in this manner might lead to a superficial reading. In such a case, Pamphilia’s ability to delay Leandrus’s marriage proposal might be deemed feminist without any further investigation (Wroth 214). Any successful challenge to patriarchal authority by a female character may surprise some modern readers due to the cultural and historical differences assumed about early modern women. Such challenges, successful or not, to patriarchal authority have been used as examples of nascent feminism in *Urania’s* characters. For example, can the character Limena, who is forced to marry Philargus and suffers grotesque torture when he finds out she is in love with another, constitute nascent feminism (87-88)? The complexity of the

question cannot be answered simply by contrasting Limena's naïvely feminine position with Philargus's naïvely masculine one.

On the other hand, when feminist theory is applied too aggressively, it may be impossible to trace representations of female agency in early modern texts. Modern readers, myself included, often fall victim to the latent idea that a "cultural timeline" exists that moves from a primitive state to a more advanced one, a fallacious application of evolution to an entity that operates independently of evolution. This folly is perpetuated by the temporal separation between texts of the past and modernity. Joan Kelly identifies historical instances of this fallacy in her book, *Women, History, & Theory*:

One of the tasks of women's history is to call into question accepted schemes of periodization. To take the emancipation of women as a vantage point is to discover that events that further the historical development of men, liberating them from natural, social, or ideological constraints, have quite different, even opposite, effects upon women. The Renaissance is a good case and point. (19)

Kelly goes on to say that Renaissance developments—such as consolidation of states, mercantile and manufacturing economies, and postfeudal social relations—helped advance societies which then found time for the social and cultural expressions for which the Renaissance period is known. These developments and advances, regularly viewed as progressive, conceal women's regressing social status. Kelly publicizes this issue:

Yet precisely these developments affected women adversely, so much so that there was no renaissance for women—at least, not during the

Renaissance. [. . .] Women as a group [. . .] [e]xperienced a contraction of social and personal options that men of their classes either did not, as was the case with the bourgeoisie, or did not experience as markedly, as was the case with the nobility. (19-20)

Kelly uses this example to demonstrate how technological and cultural advances, historically considered triumphs of the Renaissance period, can easily overshadow an entire group of women for whom many of these advances proved to be more detrimental than beneficial. This example also invalidates the notion of equating temporal progression with social progression. This fallacious “cultural timeline” also tends to reduce early modern women by making them appear to be oblivious to what a modern reader might deem a restrictive patriarchal authority and to be willing followers of these restrictions. Readings like this result from attempting to strictly apply modern definitions of feminism to early modern women. Ironically, one effect of applying feminist theory too aggressively is identical to applying feminist theory too passively: since the women are typically viewed as lesser, any resistance to a patriarchal authority may be considered feminist. I will refer back to the ideas of passive and aggressive application of feminist theory throughout this work in order to situate my analysis of *Urania* in a neutral position between the two.

The main problem with being hypersensitive to these two extremes is a difficulty in defining what constitutes “feminist” behavior. Our modern concept of “feminism” might start with the *Oxford English Dictionary*: “Advocacy of equality of the sexes and

the establishment of the political, social, and economic rights of the female sex; the movement associated with this” (“feminism, n.”). The *OED* also notes:

The issue of rights for women first became prominent during the French and American revolutions in the late 18th century, with regard especially to property rights, the marriage relationship, and the right to vote. In Britain it was not until the emergence of the suffragette movement in the late 19th century that there was significant political change. A ‘second wave’ of feminism arose in the 1960s, concerned especially with economic and social discrimination, with an emphasis on unity and sisterhood. A more diverse ‘third wave’ is sometimes considered to have arisen in the 1980s and 1990s, as a reaction against the perceived lack of focus on class and race issues in earlier movements.

In addition, there are many stereotypes associated with the idea of feminism. Our modern understanding of feminists has been colored by caricatures such as Wonder Woman or Rosie the Riveter—both women ostensibly doing “men’s work”—and events such as “bra burning” parties associated with second wave feminists. However, Pamphilia doesn’t embody any of these characteristics. She is not vocal, even among her female cohorts, about any type of women’s rights including marriage rights, a common concern amongst women in *Urania*. Pamphilia does not suggest a perceived inequality in either speech or internal monologue. In fact, the idea of “women’s rights” would not have been an immediately comprehensible term for the women in *Urania*. The first citation of “women’s rights,” according to the *OED*, doesn’t occur until 11 years later in 1632 (“women’s rights, n.”). However, I am not implying that feelings of inequality

didn't exist. I maintain that the absence of feminist terminology is not reason enough to exclude *Urania* from feminist analysis. I seek to call Pamphilia a feminist. In order to do so, a clarified definition of "early modern feminism" must be established.

Frequently during my writing process, I grappled with finding the most accurate, least ambiguous words to describe the particular elements of what I perceived to be early modern feminism. Very often these words appear in criticism as "agency," "discretion," "will," and from *Urania* the ability to be "soveraigne of your selfe" (Wroth 214). When I began to examine what precisely I meant when I used these words under the umbrella of feminism, I very frequently realized what I meant was "freedom" in the most basic sense, the ability to choose for one's self. In *Urania*, we should be open to the idea that there is freedom in choice even when the choices are internal and external constraints prevail. By this I mean a woman's intentions and chosen reactions to patriarchal authority have more weight in determining a feminist will than any physical outcome. With this in mind, discretion can be viewed as the mode by which early modern women enact their will and enable construction of self, which is, in essence, the ultimate goal of feminism. For my purpose, "early modern feminism" is a woman's will to express and explore her self in relation to society. The ideology interpellated in early modern feminism is that, through her will, each woman advocates for herself. Therefore, in order to be called a feminist, Pamphilia must, to some extent, demonstrate an ability to assume an identity and role in society. Defining "early modern feminism" in this way reconciles the problems with applying feminist theory too passively and too aggressively. For advocates of a passive approach, this definition allows multiple characteristics to be considered feminist through

the exploration of self. Yet it does not allow every action taken by a female to be considered feminist without deeper consideration. For advocates of an aggressive approach, this definition requires the woman to attempt an action, to express her self in relation to society. Yet it does not require that each action be successful. In *Urania*, the appearance of early modern feminism is signified by the trifecta of will, discretion, and agency.

For my analysis of *The First Part of the Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, I will focus on the protagonist, Pamphilia, in order to simplify and highlight this proposed method for reading feminist themes in early modern texts and show how social actions reflect underlying feminist themes. This, in itself, produces further complications because Pamphilia, who for my purposes will at times be asked to represent early modern women, is a princess of privileged birth and named the heir to the kingdom of Pamphilia by her uncle (Wroth 100, 145). Immediately the question comes to mind: is it fair to suggest that Pamphilia could be feminist rather than merely an exception due to her privilege? The answer to this question might be somewhat unsatisfying, but I come to it from two vantage points. First, the patriarchy is the prevailing social structure in *Urania*. "Patriarchy" is defined as, "A form of social organization in which the father or oldest male is the head of the family, and descent and relationship are reckoned through the male line; government or rule by a man or men" (*OED* "patriarchy, n."). While renovations were being made to this social structure, they were not being made in any formal or structured way that was conscious of women's rights. Second, even though Pamphilia was born privileged she was also born female and, from an early age,

indoctrinated into a society that typically valued men's opinions over women's because, according to the doctrines of the patriarchy, women should not have opinions or at least not express them. So I must conclude, yes, it is fair to suggest that Pamphilia has potential to possess feminist traits. However, I will supplement my analysis throughout with other female characters in order to sharpen the feminist themes in *Urania* and situate my definition of early modern feminism.

In her book, *What You Will*, Kathryn Schwarz tackles similar problems with applying feminist theory to early modern texts framed through Shakespearean women. At the simplest level, women have an internal choice to make, whether or not to agree, and to what degree, with what the patriarchy has asked of them. In chapter two, I will discuss how this is the reactive part of a woman's will. It is easy to fall into the line of thinking that, if a woman is doing what the patriarchy prescribes, then she is doing so out of an obligation which negates her will and possibility for feminist characteristics. A woman's agreement or disagreement with patriarchal social codes is a reflection of her will, which need not always oppose patriarchal authority in order to be considered feminist. In Schwarz's words, "Will follows the dictates of reason, yet pursues its own goals" (37). Will is composed in the mind and, therefore, is unable to be extracted or seized by an outside force. It can reasonably be assumed that at the moment a woman becomes aware of a restrictive structure, there is a simultaneous moment when she becomes conscious of her opinion of that restriction, her will. Schwarz explicates how women may agree and comply with a restrictive patriarchal decree while maintaining a feminist will and actually creating a heterosocial system: "The gap between decree and execution requires an

acquiescence that is deliberate and transactional rather than innate; through the contradictory logic of prescribed choice, feminine will becomes the means of social contract” (3). The implications of a system that works in this way, Schwarz explains, actually positions women as agents of the tangible and men as agents of the intangible: “Heterosocial futurity abides in contracts that yoke feminine acts of will to masculine acts of faith” (7). The necessity for feminine acts (the tangible) to corroborate masculine acts of faith (the intangible) creates a strong interdependence between masculine “authority” and feminine “subjection” to that authority. The difference between what had first appeared to me as women’s *acceptance* of patriarchal law and what turns out to very frequently be women’s *acquiescence* to patriarchal law transforms the superficial to meaningful and in fact is what creates the gap that allows movement below the threshold of awareness. My analysis of Pamphilia’s feminist characteristics will be dependent on understanding her will and demonstrating how her will is reflected in her actions. Unfortunately, a large part of suggesting what constitutes a particular woman’s will involves investigating her use of discretion, nonverbal cues which include silence, secrecy, and misdirection, as well as postulating what these signify. I will consider how Pamphilia uses misdirection to create ciphers and deny authorship while enacting her will (Wroth 92, 94, 325). Reading Pamphilia’s will is key to understanding how she navigates society and key to recognizing how she enables and executes her preferences. Understanding Pamphilia’s will also allows an exploration of the identity Pamphilia has created for herself. Chapter one will discuss Pamphilia’s interactions with other characters as a means to demonstrate and define her agency. Chapter two will reveal the

gap between Pamphilia's public and private life and demonstrate and define how her agency is enabled by discretion. Chapter three will question what Pamphilia does with her forged agency as regards uncovering the unique identity she has created for herself. Ultimately, I will provide the foundation to suggest that Pamphilia is not merely a cog in a patriarchal machine, but an individual who has created the ability to express and explore her self in society.

ON HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

Throughout this analysis, I will refrain from falling too far into historical criticism or even drawing too heavily on similarities between Lady Mary Wroth and Pamphilia. When dealing with such an old text, it becomes easy to confuse actual historical occurrences with those fictionalized in the text, and worse fictionalized text with actual history. This fine line is complicated by Wroth's personal narrative in the history of England. In the biography *Mary Sidney, Lady Wroth*, Margaret Hannay makes the same assertion:

We need to be very careful to leave some space between Wroth and her various characters, including Pamphilia, for Wroth is an accomplished writer of fiction, and it is by no means clear how closely connected Pamphilia's career is to Wroth's own life, 'as the biographical is simultaneously asserted and denied.' [. . .] Her writings are so tantalizingly autobiographical and yet so utterly

unreliable as documentary sources that they function more like a kaleidoscope than a mirror. (xii)

The three primary analogues drawn are between Mary Wroth and characters Pamphilia, Bellamira, and Lindamira. In order, these analogues have been viewed as representations of Wroth's public life, private relationships, and courtier/poet life. These types of comparisons were also the basis of criticism after *The First Part of the Countess of Montgomery's Urania* was published in 1621. In particular Sir Edward Denny took offense at what seemed to him to be *Urania's* blatant allusions to Wroth's real life contemporaries, specifically regarding accounts of his own infidelities. He went so far as to write a poetic retort which begins,

Hermophradite in show, in deed a monster
As by thy words and works all men may conster
Thy wrathfull spite conceived an Idell book
Brought forth a foole which like the damme doth look. (Roberts 32)

Naturally with a corresponding poem, Wroth denied the claims that the characters of her book had real life analogues:

Hirmophradite in sense in Art a monster
As by your railing rimes the world may conster
Your spitefull words against a harmless booke
Shows that an ass much like the sire doth looke (34)

This real life episode invites questions relevant to the fiction of *Urania* and adds a feminist context: what does it mean for Wroth to have written at all? what does it mean

for her to have been published in her lifetime? The questions become essential to ask of Pamphilia insofar as Pamphilia is an avatar for Wroth herself. Such questions highlight the shared problem of applying feminist theory too passively and too aggressively: Wroth may be viewed as a feminist simply because her *Urania* was the first romance published by an Englishwoman. Yet this seems somewhat paradoxical set against the fact that *Urania* was published with little opposition and, according to Hannay, because of her family's literary affiliations (including Philip Sidney and the Countess of Pembroke), "Young Mall [Mary Wroth] knew from early childhood that a woman—at least a *Sidney* woman—could be a published and highly respected author" (39). It is interesting to note that today Wroth is grouped into the male dominated "Philip Sidney, Edmund Spencer Circle," as it wasn't until the twentieth century that women writers were consistently considered indispensable parts of the canon of English literature. And there's the rub: "Hermophradite in show, in deed a monster." Surely, Denny implies, Wroth must not be a woman and is in fact a monster. Denny's response to Wroth forces a feminist analysis of her work for the simple fact that he questions Wroth's, and by extension women's, role and involvement in society.

CHAPTER I

“DISCRETION IT SELFE IS BEST”—TRACING PAMPHILIA’S AGENCY

With over 600 named characters in *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania*, Mary Wroth’s attention to relationships, especially at a time when relationships were frequently pragmatic in nature, suggests not only that she valued character and conflict over her complex, casually developed plot but that she felt something deeper could be communicated through the complexity of human interactions. As a consequence, the lives of the women of *Urania* center almost exclusively on their relationships with others—familial, romantic, and friendly—some of which were formed by choice and others of which were forced upon them by societal standards. To many modern readers, the presence of aristocratic patriarchal marriage and other types of arranged marriage in *Urania* may be difficult to accept, clouding the readers’ minds and resulting in an inability to read how women feel about being forced into these marriages. While we should not ignore the tensions between past and present, we should also not allow the dissolution of the practice of formally arranging marriages in most modern English-speaking countries to alienate us from the text or tarnish our reading of the characters for whom such relationships were the norm. Instead, we may use to our advantage what we know about how marriage has changed from 400 years ago to explain what Wroth may

have been attempting to suggest about arranged and enforced marriages, as well as to look into how the women represented in *Urania* feel about these marriages. Throughout the text, there are vivid examples of these forced unions butting up against a will to change and a refusal to accept previous norms. In particular, the pursuit of Pamphilia by Leandrus presents an interesting look at an adaptation of a traditional proposal to a changing social scene coupled with an emerging determination by women to get what they want versus what they have been given. By examining the relationships Pamphilia holds with both her father and Leandrus, I will demonstrate how she uses misdirection as a means to agency, which will open up a discussion of what constitutes feminist characteristics versus what cannot within the realm of early modern feminism as defined in the introduction.

Leandrus's courtship of Pamphilia is complex; at times, he seems surprisingly open-minded, and at other times he seems disappointingly conventional. Leandrus was dealt a "cureless wound by the never failing commanding eyes of Pamphilia," resulting in an obsessive pursuit of her hand in marriage (Wroth 101). Leandrus's description of Pamphilia's eyes might seem out of place because we expect the adjectives "never failing" and "commanding" to describe masculine characteristics rather than feminine. This view of a woman through Leandrus's eyes could be read as an early attempt by a man to accept the changing social scene in which women increasingly gain independence. However, as with all prior advancements, there was no previously defined formula for how to achieve social change. As evidence of his broadening views, Leandrus considers a variety of approaches to make Pamphilia his wife. At first, he considers

simply proposing to her: “Sometimes purposing to ask her in marriage” (101). Then he considers the possibility of winning her in a tournament scenario, “Another time hoping first by his desert to win her love” (101). And finally, he devises a scheme to befriend Parselius and Rosindy, her brothers, and Amphilanthus, the man with whom she is secretly in love unbeknownst to Leandrus, “Then promising himselfe the furtherance of Parselius, the labour of Rosindy, the favour of Amphilanthus, the earnestnesse of his owne affection, and lover-like importunity” (101). The tactics Leandrus considers cover the conventional route of simply asking her father for his daughter’s hand in marriage and the Medieval route of “winning” the lady, but they also reveal an alternative route involving a complex matrix of interpersonal relationships and courtship rituals which requires befriending Parselius, Rosindy, and Amphilanthus. Given the historical pattern (discussed in depth in the following paragraph), it is understandable why Leandrus was sure that one of these would work. Until recently in early modern times, a suitor merely needed to show the father of his interest how becoming his daughter’s husband would be mutually beneficial, gain the father’s consent, and finally ask the daughter to marry him. As daughters from wealthy and powerful families were often granted one refusal by their fathers, it is obvious why Leandrus would have secondary options for attaining Pamphilia, in the event that the proposal to the King failed. One such alternative that Leandrus suggests involved the Medieval notion that a man might simply win a *lady* fair and square in a tournament. Although Leandrus does consider these possibilities, he settles on one in which it is necessary for him to gain the acclaim of Pamphilia’s friends and family before proposing directly to her: “Yet wanted hee her consent, the better part

of the gaining and the harder to bee gaind” (101). However, when, as we shall see, Pamphilia cunningly evades Leandrus’s advance, he is forced to revert to conventional methods of courtship and turns to her father, the King of Morea.

During the century when Wroth wrote *Urania*, a paradigm shift from Catholicism to Protestantism had occurred, and England had already experienced two female monarchs. Prevailing social codes and behavior directives that had been in fashion until recently were being revised but not necessarily in a formal or structured way. Early in the sixteenth century, Juan Luis Vives wrote one of the most popular conduct books for women, *De Institutionae foeminae Christianae*, later translated into English by Richard Hyrde as *A very fruteful and pleasant boke, called the instruccion of a Christen woman* (1523, 1529). Vives, a Catholic, viewed marriage as a sacrament, and love, excluding sexual love, as a byproduct of marriage, not a prerequisite (Kelso 56). Vives’s stance, even in the time of *Urania*, was slightly Medieval because he placed literal value on women’s chastity. In his estimation, the worth of the marriage was dependent on the purity of the woman. Vives suggests that the mere act of her feeling love toward a suitor would tarnish the woman’s chastity and make suitors suspicious (56). By Vives’s standards, there is no room for love before marriage. Following marriage, love, though still not sexual, should develop as a consequence of the holiness of the marriage and symbolize a sacrament. Furthermore, a woman who refuses a proposal on the basis that she does not foresee the possibility to love the suitor could be viewed as disrupting “God’s laws,” whereas, a woman who encourages the love of a suitor runs the risk of being viewed as a “drab” or “harlot” (56). It seems that, for a woman to follow Vives’s

advice, she must neither be too enthusiastic nor too resistant to a suitor's proposal, leaving the woman little choice but to be passively compliant to her father's request for her to marry. Vives, as I have said, is a somewhat extreme example to hold up to *Urania*. In *Women, History, & Theory*, Joan Kelly notes and subsequently rejects what some have perceived as conflicting ideas on how a woman should conduct herself regarding the opposite sex:

Ideas about the relation of the sexes range from a relatively complementary sense of sex roles in literature dealing with courtly manners, love, and education, to patriarchal conceptions in writing on marriage and the family, to a fairly equal presentation of sex roles in early Utopian social theory. Such diversity need not baffle the attempt to reconstruct a history of sex-role conceptions. [. . .] Toward this end, one needs to sort out this material in terms of the social groups to which it responds [. . .] Once distinguished, each of these groups of sources tells the same story. Each discloses in its own way certain new constraints suffered by Renaissance women as the family and political life were restructured in the great transition from medieval feudal society to the early modern state. [. . .] Suffice it to say that [conduct directives] sharply distinguish an inferior domestic realm of women from the superior public realm of men. (21)

Women's relegation to inferior domestic spaces, as opposed to the superior public spaces inhabited by men, is a key component for my suggestion that Pamphilia is an early modern feminist, a topic that should become clearer as we progress. Kelly concludes that every conduct manual for women, whether it be specified for a certain religion, social

class, or not, impinges on women's freedom simply by conducting, or leading, them to what is *right*. So even though Vives was a Catholic and *Urania* subscribes to a more Protestant point of view, Vives's viewpoints serve to succinctly demonstrate how Renaissance women came to be "bound by the triple injunction to chastity, silence, and obedience" (Andrea 335).

Given the resistance to change every successful social revolution has faced, Leandrus's struggle to choose the most appropriate proposal comes as no surprise. Leandrus regresses from a more innovative attempt to marry Pamphilia, as when he considers befriending the people closest to her and gaining their acclaim to win her favor, to a more conventional method namely asking Pamphilia's father for her hand in marriage after his attempt to ask her directly fails (Wroth 212-15, 261, 262). Despite his attempts at being open-minded and forward-thinking, when Leandrus approaches Pamphilia to ask her to marry him, he treats her as a woman who is in need of his protection, asking rhetorically, "Is it possible (most excelling Queene) that such a spirit, and so great a Princesse, should be thus alone, and adventure without guard?" (213). In fact, Pamphilia had been walking alone in the garden, lamenting Amphilanthus's absence, when Leandrus approached her with this concern. The thought that being alone in the garden might put her in danger had not crossed her mind, and she brushes it aside in her reply: "'My spirit my Lord,' [Pamphilia] said, 'As well guards me alone, as in company; and for my person, my greatnesse, and these walls are sufficient warrants, and guardians for my safety'" (213). Leandrus continues to play on this concern for her safety, a poorly

veiled threat, in order to establish a viable need for his presence and proposed solution, marriage:

“Yet your safety might bee more,” said hee, “If joynd with one, who might defend you upon all occasions, both with his love and strength, while these dull walls can onely incompasse you: but if traitors assaile you, their help will bee but to stand still, poorely gaine-saying.” (213)

Even though Leandrus attempts to use a progressive method of proposal, directly asking the woman of interest for her consent, he does so in a way that positions her as a lesser, incapable person, a tactic that seems contrary to his description of her “never fayling commanding” eyes. If Leandrus had managed to gain her consent through such means, it would have been out of fear on Pamphilia’s part, an emotion which negates genuine consent. However, Pamphilia does not fall victim to Leandrus’s scare tactics. Leandrus, “whose end was to procure favour, not to contend,” recants:

Let my tongue bee the deliverer to you of the most fervent affection that ever heart bare to Princesse, with the truest and unfaigned love; disdain not then my affection, since I will with loyalty and service deserve your favour, as wel or better then any man breathing: a Crowne I will adde to yours, and the soveraigne command of Leandrus: but what talk I of a Crowne to her, who weares the crowne of all vertues? (214)

It is interesting to note what Leandrus is actually offering. In addition to unfeigned love, affection, and loyalty, Leandrus offers Pamphilia sovereign command of himself. After Pamphilia refuses his protection, Leandrus tries to revise his offer to fit the changing

times, a potentially risky maneuver that he quells through word choice. While he does offer her sovereignty, the sovereignty he offers is not over a people or even herself but the “soveraigne command of Leandrus,” an unattainable control of his heart that might be viewed as another one of Leandrus’s manipulations in search of his goal. Pamphilia does not accept Leandrus’s framework, and she politely declines:

I cannot but thanke you for your princely offerer; but it must bee my fathers liking, with the consent of my nearest and dearest friends that can set any other Crowne on my head, then that which my people have already settled there; and the consent of so great a people, and so loving to me, must not neglected; what vertues are in me, shall appeare through the obedience I owe, and will pay to his Majesty, the rest: therefore I am altogether unable to give you satisfaction any further then this. (214)

Pamphilia’s response may seem surprising for someone whose eyes have been described as never failing and commanding and for someone who needs no guards while walking around the garden. Her response does not necessarily lower her to the archetype of damsel in distress, but it definitely does not position her as someone capable of making her own decisions. On a superficial level, the manner in which she replies suggests that she subscribes to the dictates of the patriarchy. This reaction reveals two important things about her: first, that Pamphilia is familiar with traditional marriage conventions, and, second, she is willing to exploit the conventions in order to avoid Leandrus’s proposal. Pamphilia’s exploitation of the patriarchal structure in order to avoid being subject to its laws is somewhat ironic. An aggressive application of feminist theory might say that the

use of traditional conventions, even as means to evade an unwanted proposal, is detrimental to a society in flux because, while it opens an opportunity for one woman, at the same time it reinforces, and even strengthens, the patriarchal structures that oppress women in general. A reading like this positions Pamphilia as a woman working for her own self-interest and perpetuating the problem rather than positioning her as a feminist. I do not agree with this interpretation. In a similar exploitation of ideology, immediately preceding Leandrus's proposal to Pamphilia, Leandrus states: "love with discretion is the truest love," by which he appears to mean that freely chosen love is best (213). The idea of discretion will be discussed at length in the following chapter. However, the logic of Leandrus's statement is contradictory to that of aristocratic patriarchal marriage, but it makes sense through the lens of Leandrus's agenda. Leandrus allows Pamphilia the opportunity to freely choose her love, as long as her choice is Leandrus. This conundrum offers a peek inside the irrationality of the patriarchy. Leandrus uses the seemingly progressive notion that women may choose for themselves. However, by *allowing* Pamphilia to decide for herself, he is immediately undermining her agency. Essentially, Leandrus is giving Pamphilia permission to decide for herself with the obvious stipulation that, if she does not choose him, he will find other means to marry her. The division here between right and wrong, how Pamphilia's exploitation is considered feminist and how Leandrus's exploitation is considered misogynist, is slight but significantly important, a point I'll return to at the end of this chapter.

Throughout *Urania*, the reader is sent conflicting signals as to whether Pamphilia is free to make her own decisions or not. This confusion could either be a product of how

Wroth felt she *had* to write because of the time period in which she was writing, how she thought it would be *best* to present progressive new ideas to her audience, or some amalgamation of both. Historical speculation aside, there is obvious friction between the expected agency of a respectable Renaissance woman and the agency Pamphilia appears to possess. On one hand, Pamphilia defers Leandrus's proposal to her father as would be expected. On the other hand, Pamphilia ultimately gets what she wants, manifesting her will into reality. As stated in the introduction, the concept of "agency" plays a key role in early modern feminism. Although the modern definition of agency, "a business, body, or organization providing a particular service, or negotiating transactions on behalf of a person or group," is not exactly the same as Pamphilia's sense of agency, it provides a useful metaphor for understanding what it means for Pamphilia to possess agency (*OED* "agency, n."). For example, a modern auto insurance agency appoints an agent to take action on behalf of the client but always under the rules of the agency. After the client is in a car accident, the agent goes through the necessary negotiations to insure that the client gets what is deserved under the rules of the agency. From this example, it is easy to see that in the realm of *Urania* the agency is the patriarchy, the agent is the patriarch, and the daughter is the client. In this case however, the agency is not hired by the client but forced onto the client by birth. Pamphilia's agency is best described as the "ability or capacity to act or exert power," or, as I've said previously, the ability to manifest one's will onto reality (*OED* "agency, n."). When I suggest that Pamphilia possess agency, I am suggesting that Pamphilia has the ability to act which should recall the definition of early modern feminism from the introduction: a woman's will to express

and explore her self in relation to society. Even though Pamphilia's agency remains somewhat ambiguous after her interaction with Leandrus, Pamphilia's interaction with her father, the patriarch, on the subject makes her agency more apparent. If Pamphilia were subject to her father's will, then she would not possess an ability to exert power in any extraordinary capacity. However, as we will see, her father accepts her will, which is evidence of her privileged agency.

In the scene during which Pamphilia's father approaches her about Leandrus's proposal, the royal court has just eaten a dinner during which Leandrus seemed "full of discontent" (Wroth 262). Pamphilia's father, the King of Morea and "the lovingest of fathers," pulls her away to discuss Leandrus's proposal with her (60):

After dinner the King call'd his daughter Pamphilia to him, telling her what an earnest suiter Leandrus was to him for his consent to have her in marriage, which he liked very well of, considering his worth, and the fitnessse of his estate, alleaging all the reasons that a wise and carefull father could make unto himselfe, or perswade with, to a beloved daughter. (262)

The King does not approach his daughter as if the proposal from Leandrus is binding. Instead, the King attempts to highlight Leandrus's good qualities in order to persuade Pamphilia to agree to the marriage which the King "liked very well" (262). The mere idea that a daughter might be *persuaded* by her father, rather than *told*, to marry a suitor directly contrasts with Vives's ideas on marriage. However, this approach falls in line with Jonathan Goldberg's description of marriage agreements in *Rewriting the Renaissance*:

The ideology of the Renaissance family is opposed to modern, liberal views. The family in the Renaissance is inevitably a public unit. Marriage occurred between families; diplomacy was carried on through marriage; kings more and more stressed their legitimacy by pointing to their lineage and invented ancestries to further the sense that genealogy was destiny. (7)

For the King of Morea, Leandrus's worth and fitness of estate make him a desirable addition to the family. Yet the King does not force Leandrus's proposal on Pamphilia, an indication of the King's enlightened position and perhaps even an indication that social changes are approaching. The conventional expectation would be for Pamphilia to willingly accept her father's proposition that she marry Leandrus on the basis that he approved and it was beneficial to the family. However, she reacts differently:

she humbly made this answer; That all those things his Majesty had said, she confessed to be true, and that he was worthy of the greatest fortune the world had in a wife: but his Majestie had once married her before, which was to the Kingdom of Pamphilia, from which Husband shee could not be divorced, nor ever would have other, if it might please him to give her leave to enjoy that happinesse; and besides, besought his permission, "for my Lord," said shee, "my people looke for me, and I must needs be with them." (Wroth 262)

Pamphilia, again, does not cite lack of love as the reason that she is not interested in Leandrus. Instead, Pamphilia demonstrates that her interest is also in family diplomacy, and she implies that marrying Leandrus would disrupt that, her first "marriage" to the Kingdom of Pamphilia from which she could not be "divorced," echoing the words of

Elizabeth I. However, we know that Pamphilia is capable of love and, in truth, doesn't want to marry Leandrus because she is in love with Amphilanthus. Pamphilia's father then assures her "that he would not force her to any thing against her mind" (263). It is unclear whether the King would have otherwise given Pamphilia the consideration of her preference in marriage had she not persuaded him with her commitment to her country. In either case, Pamphilia's power to deny Leandrus's proposal shows that she is not bound by her father as traditionally would be true, despite his being an advocate for Leandrus and attempting to persuade Pamphilia to accept the proposal. Pamphilia's ability to manifest her will into reality is evidence that she possesses exceptional agency.

Talking about women's agency in *Urania* is no simple task because with each woman for every act of agency there is a corresponding moment in which she lacks it. However, it is not necessary for a woman with agency to get what she wants, nor must a woman always get what she wants in order to have a feminist will. These two elements create problems when talking about early modern feminism, returning us to a question posed in the introduction: can the character Limena, who is forced to marry Philargus and suffers grotesque torture when she attempts to leave him, constitute an early modern feminist (Wroth 87-88)? Limena's acceptance of her father's proposal that she marry Philargus is an ideal example of how a woman was expected to respond to an arranged marriage in seventeenth century culture and by extension in *Urania*:

[Limena] seeing it was her fathers will, esteeming obedience beyond all passions, how worthily soever, suffered; most dutifully, though unwillingly, said, she would obey; 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; yet thus it was concluded, and with as much speed as any man would make to an eternall happines. (5)

Limena's response portrays her virtues of silence, obedience, and chastity but at the same time reveals her inner feelings. While she "esteem[s] obedience and duty beyond all passions," she also suffers, detests, and loathes doing so because she is in love with Perissus. Shortly after their marriage, Philargus discovers that Limena is in love with Perissus and begins to torture Limena on a daily basis:

"Once every day hee brought mee to this pillar where you found me, and in the like manner bound me, then whipt me, after washing the stripes and blisters with salt water: but this had been the last (had not you thus happily arriv'd); for he determined as he said, after my tormenting had been past, in stead of washing me with sea-water, to cast me into her, and so make a finall end of his tormenting, and of my torments." (88)

A passive application of feminist theory would easily suggest that Limena possesses feminist characteristics because she continues to love Perissus despite marrying Philargus, and she even withstands torture to ultimately get what she wants. Just as I do not agree with the reading that positions Pamphilia as a woman working for her own self-interest and reinforcing patriarchal laws, I also do not agree with this reading of Limena. Much like the misreading of Pamphilia, this misreading of Limena is motivated by a superficial, non-contextual reading of the text. In each scenario, both Pamphilia and Limena ultimately get what they want. Pamphilia doesn't have to marry Leandrus, and

Limena and Perissus eventually live happily ever after. However, Pamphilia's outcome is effected by her own agency whereas Limena's outcome is happenstance. None of Limena's decisions or actions, of which there are few, directly contribute to her reunion with Perissus. In fact, she repeatedly gives up on her goal of reuniting with Perissus: "she would obey; her tongue faintly delivering, what her heart so much detested [. . .] 'I know, as your wife, I am in your power to dispose of' [. . .] 'I did, preparing my selfe to be the poore offering, but the richest, that richnesse of faith in love could offer' (5, 87). At every turn, Limena relinquishes her power to the patriarchy. She follows her father's will and marries Philargus, she resigns herself to death from torture, and ultimately she is rescued by a man, Parselius, who serves Philargus a mortal blow with his sword (84-86). As Philargus lies dying, he asks for Limena's forgiveness to which she replies: "I most sincerely and heartily forgive you, and so prey, doe you the like for me" (86). This final act solidifies Limena's genuine obedience to the patriarchal structure and revokes potential for feminist qualities.

Still the problem remains of reconciling Pamphilia's exploitation of patriarchal structures to Leandrus's exploitation of Pamphilia. The aggressive application of feminist theory that would position Pamphilia as antifeminist and suggest that she was reinforcing patriarchal structures would crucify Leandrus for exploiting the development of women's rights. Even a passive application of feminist theory would criticize Leandrus's exploitation as an excessive use of force. Pamphilia's rebellious attempt to challenge the patriarchy through morally questionable manipulation can be justified as the stand of one individual against a predominant social injustice whereas Leandrus exercises his

manipulation from a comfortable position inside the ruling social order. Pamphilia's response to Leandrus's ideas regarding "love with discretion" reveals her reasoning for citing formal patriarchal dicta in order to evade the proposal rather than being truthful: "discretion it selfe is best," and she goes on to describe discretion as "a cold part of wisdom" (Wroth 213). It can be assumed that in this episode, Pamphilia uses discretion as a means of concealing her preferences from public knowledge in order to avoid potential victimization as in Limena's cautionary tale, a point more closely examined in chapter two. In this respect, Pamphilia's alleged reinforcement of patriarchal structures can be viewed as negligible. Pamphilia acts as a "soldier" of the resistance trying to upset an unfair system through the limited means available to her. Essentially, Pamphilia's ends justify her means while Leandrus's cannot.

Pamphilia's interactions with other characters in *Urania* are complex and consequently easily misread. After analyzing these interactions, we see that Pamphilia's misdirections can be used by the reader as a signifier to clue in to the fact that what is happening on the surface is not necessarily what is important to Pamphilia. Pamphilia's misdirections include citing patriarchal social codes and allegiance to her country. These misdirections signify a complex, underlying meaning for Pamphilia that is not immediately apparent to readers. Identifying these signifiers will be necessary for chapter two's exploration of Pamphilia's complex, underlying meaning. But for now, these signifiers offer readers preliminary evidence of Pamphilia's agency. In this chapter, I've uncovered multiple contradictions and inconstancies with a traditional feminist reading and only have begun to hint at Pamphilia's agency. However, the subtle line between

what constitutes feminist behavior and what doesn't, as well as Pamphilia's ambiguous agenda, is what makes Pamphilia worth looking at through a feminist lens, an endeavor we'll explore in greater depth in chapter two.

CHAPTER II

“A CURIOUS FORM OF REVOLUTION”—FEMINIST WILL AND DISCRETION

Pamphilia's interactions with Leandrus and her father are often read as essential examples of Pamphilia's agency because of the outcome. Even though both men advocate for her marriage, she is able to impress her will on them and avoid something she ultimately does not want. However, problems arise when the way she arrives at this outcome is examined. As I've suggested before, a passive application of feminist theory might conclude that Pamphilia's actions are feminist because the outcome is in her favor, while an aggressive application might conclude that her actions are decidedly not feminist because the outcome is dependent on her manipulation of patriarchal structures. The core of the problem rests on the question: what enables Pamphilia's agency? Is it the patriarchy or she, and what are the implications of each alternative? Considering these questions reveals a gap between public and private lives of women, “a secret reservoir of complexity,” and hints at what's happening below the threshold of awareness (Oh 70). In *What You Will*, Kathryn Schwarz tackles some related questions: “What happens when feminine subjects recognize and participate in the doctrines that govern them? Whose act of will is this?” and “How can volition consummate its own surrender? What claims to self-possession does the self-forfeiting subject retain?” (2, 7). By examining all of these

questions, I will suggest that a judicious election of silence, secrecy, and/or misdirection (i.e., discretion) enables Pamphilia's agency and creates the separation we see between public reputation and private identity.

In an early episode, Pamphilia carves a sonnet into the bark of a tree and says, "Since I find no redresse, I will make others in part taste my paine, and make them dumbe partakers of my griefe" (Wroth 92). This statement of purpose is revealing. In this usage, "dumbe" means bereft of the power of speech (*OED* "dumb, adj."). However, it is unclear whether Pamphilia's future readers would be "dumbe partakers" because they are so affected by the misery of her sonnet or because they are literally unable to reply directly to the author of the sonnet. There is also a slight ambiguity in Pamphilia's reference to "others" that allows it to be read as both an audience of future readers of the tree and an audience composed of trees. In any case, Pamphilia's purpose is to make them taste her pain. The tree's pain comes from literally being carved into: "shee had begunne to ingrave in the barke of those fayre and straight Ashes, causing that sapp to accompany her teares for love" (Wroth 92). Her future readers will taste her pain through the sadness of the sonnet. In the sonnet, Pamphilia positions herself as the suffering lover much as an archetypal Petrarchan lover would. She aggrandizes the importance of her love for Amphilanthus. The most important element of her stated purpose, though, is that she has found a public outlet for her private thoughts:

Beare part with me most straight and pleasant Tree,

And imitate the Torments of my smart

Which cruell Love doth send into my heart,

Keep in thy skin this testament of me:
 Which Love ingraven hath with miserie,
 Cutting with grieve the unresisting part,
 Which would with pleasure soone have learnd loves art
 But wounds still curelesse, must my rulers bee.
 Thy sap doth weepingly bewray thy paine,
 My heart-blood drops with stormes it doth sustaine,
 Love sencelesse, neither good nor mercy knowes
 Pitiles I doe swound thee, while that I
 Unpitied, and unthought on, wounded crie:
 Then out-live me, and testifie my woes. (92)

Pamphilia memorializes herself and her heartbreak through this carving, without which she might remain “unpitied and unthought on.” Pamphilia’s words, “wounds still curelesse,” are echoed just ten pages later when Leandrus contemplates how to propose to Pamphilia. His heart is described as, “having receiv’d a cureles wound” (101). This is almost enough to suggest that Leandrus has become one of Pamphilia’s victims, a future reader of her sonnet or a “dumbe partaker.” If Leandrus’s “cureles wound” had been a direct quotation from him, then it would be easy to suggest that he walked past her sonnet written on the tree as he approached her in the garden, and perhaps, being so affected by her words, his heart mimicked the “cureles wound.” However, without a direct quotation, the similar wording might just be chalked up to coincidence; yet both relate to a common source—the pain of unrequited love.

Such carvings are a common practice in *Urania*. In a later episode, Pamphilia carves a cipher into an oak tree: “Then tooke she a knife, and in the rine of an Oake insculped a sypher, which contained the letters, or rather the Anagram of his name shee most and only lov'd” (Wroth 325). In the commentary of *Urania*, Josephine Roberts suggests how this cipher might appear, “On the cover of the Penshurst manuscript of [Wroth’s drama] *Loves Victorie* there is a cipher consisting of the letters of the name AMPHILANTHVS, arranged within the letter A” (755). A few hundred pages later during a walk, the Queene of Naples, Perissus, and Limena find “many knots, and names ingraven up on the trees” (490). Perissus recognizes one as Pamphilia’s but does not allow himself to attribute it to her: “Perissus remembered one of the Ciphers, yet because it was Pamphilias hee would not knowe it” (490). In another episode, Antissia discovers Pamphilia’s engraved sonnet and, unlike Perissus, reveals to Pamphilia that she recognizes her as the author. This creates a tension between Antissia and Pamphilia because Pamphilia does not wish to reveal her love for Amphilanthus, whom Antissia also loves. The roles these mysterious carvings play are multidimensional. For the characters in *Urania*, the carvings are a puzzle to be parsed out, a cipher. For the writer, in this case Pamphilia, they are a means to signify an audience, a way to convey a private feeling publicly while remaining discreet, and they are the first indication of how Pamphilia uses discretion to enable agency. She is able to make her private grief a public declaration because of the built-in plausible deniability of carving into a tree.

Another interesting facet Pamphilia’s carving reveals is her desire to write, and, more importantly, her desire to be heard publicly. In the introduction, I mention the

dangers of viewing early modern women as naïve followers, a misinterpretation that might lead one to believe that women's wills were inextricably connected to men's. Pamphilia's creativity in finding a venue to display her desire to be heard would qualify such claims as it demonstrates a proactively motivated will independent of outside entanglements. While the implications of a will to be heard but not known might cause tension in a modern sense of feminism because of the element of advocacy therein, this tension is reconciled in early modern feminism because it centers on a discretion-enabled agency, which I will return to shortly. Bernadette Andrea highlights Pamphilia's writings, as opposed to carvings, and then a purposeful denial of authorship in "Pamphilia's Cabinet: Gendered Authorship and Empire in Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania*":

In an exemplary scene of writing, Pamphilia who is caught in one of the many love triangles that motivate the interwoven plot of the *Urania*, retreats to her chamber "taking a little Cabinet with her"; this cabinet contains her collected works, she "being excellent in writing". She reads her verse, writes some more, re-reads what she has written, and "[t]hen tooke shee the new-writ lines, and as soone almost as shee had given them life, shee likewise gave them burriall." [. . .] I wish to stress the central paradox our introduction to Pamphilia as a poet foregrounds: even as her poem is preserved at the metanarrative level, thus preventing her erasure as the *Urania*'s prototypical woman writer, the local narrative framing her poem inscribes the contained position of the woman writer in the romance (and, by extension, in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English culture). (335)

To clarify, Pamphilia's poem is preserved at the metanarrative level because it is literally printed in *Urania* whereas within the narrative of *Urania* the poem is burned (Wroth 62). Andrea sees this as paradoxical because, to readers of *Urania*, Pamphilia is, though fictional, a prototypical female writer, but within the narrative of *Urania*, Pamphilia is seldom considered an author. This is the same type of tension created when Pamphilia carves her sonnet into the tree without claiming authorship. The disconnect between writing and authorship seems to denote the difference between remaining private or going public with one's work, a disconnect frequently, though not exclusively, connected to women. Women have commonly chosen to write under male pseudonyms, contributed to male authorship without credit, or even have their writing mistakenly attributed to the wrong person, as happened to Mary Wroth's aunt, the Countess of Pembroke, when her poem, "To The Angel Spirit of the Most Excellent Sir Philip Sidney," was mistakenly attributed to Samuel Daniel in 1623 (Hannay 38). In his book *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts*, H. R. Woudhuysen complicates the matter of writing versus authorship further: "In early modern England the ability to write, and to write with a clear hand was valuable" (29). Such an ability might lead to a job as a copyist of manuscripts, as all early modern texts started as handwriting and early modern England was a "manuscript culture" (11). There were multiple reasons authors might leave their writing in manuscript form:

The [printing] press allowed the rapid reproduction of multiple copies of a work, but printing demanded financial capital, a workforce, and a means of distribution, publishing, by which to make books public. [. . .] [Whereas,] manuscripts had the

added advantage of allowing authors and scribes to reach precisely the audience they wanted to address. (11-12)

Mary Wroth took advantage of the latter after the negative receptions of her first volume of *Urania*: “Women in particular found the use of manuscript to their advantage. After her troubles over the printing of *The countesse of Mountgomerie’s Urania*, Sidney’s niece, Mary Wroth, kept the second part of the work, and the related play *Love’s victory*, in manuscript” (13).

Early modern issues associated with writing versus authorship might seem peculiar in light of our modern intellectual property laws and reverence of celebrity. For Pamphilia to literally carve out a position from which to be heard and simultaneously refuse authorship might even seem contradictory and antifeminist because of the notion that she wants to be heard but does not take responsibility for what is being said. However, as I’ll explain, Pamphilia’s ambition to convey ideas in spite of potential ridicule subverts such claims.

For readers of *Urania*, the ciphers provide clues to uncovering what’s going on below the threshold of awareness. In her article, “[T]he art to decipher the true Character of Constancy’: Female Silence in Wroth’s *Urania*,” Elisa Oh discusses this:

Readers of ciphers in the *Urania* comprise a useful model for ideal readers of female silences, because readers of both sign systems must learn to expect artful indirection. The best readers of ciphers and silences anticipate complex hidden meanings embedded in the ‘cipher’ and then use their specialized knowledge to decode the correct messages. (54-55)

Oh suggests that the use of ciphers is mirrored in Wroth's construction of the female characters in *Urania*, a point that is paramount to interpreting Pamphilia. Wroth wrote the character Pamphilia to appear to the other characters as "wholly excellent" and "the most silent and discreetly retir'd of any Princesse," "who weares the crowne of all vertues" (Wroth 61, 95, 214). These traits suggest a woman who dutifully follows patriarchal social codes. However, if her poetry and willfulness were known to the other characters, these virtues might not be attributed to her, especially silence and discretion. With this in mind it is impossible to comprehend a woman's complete identity if she is merely taken at face value. In this case, due to the conscious creation of ciphers whose meanings elude readers and are meant to do so, Pamphilia's motivations are especially likely to remain below the threshold of awareness for other characters. That is to say that even though Pamphilia may appear silent, chaste, and obedient it doesn't necessarily mean she is. In the following paragraphs, I will suggest that it is Pamphilia's virtuous reputation that allows her the latitude to enact her will without suspicion. For example, the misdirection Pamphilia uses on Leandrus when she tells him he must approach her father with his proposal seems to go unsuspected as misdirection by Leandrus because he expects her to act according to patriarchal social codes apparently due to her virtuous reputation. Furthermore, Pamphilia's virtuous reputation is not what constitutes Pamphilia's whole identity as one might expect. Much like the readers of ciphers, readers of *Urania* must use a specialized knowledge to look below the threshold of awareness and decode what motivates Pamphilia's will.

The *OED* defines “will” as, “Desire, wish, longing; liking, inclination, disposition (to do something), as contrasted with power or opportunity” (“will, n.”). Will is an internal motivator that independently calls one to action, whereas power and opportunity are often external motivators dependent on an authority. The elements one *chooses* to comprise will are proactive motivators and key to an individual’s identity. However, one’s will may be *shaped* by outside factors, such as patriarchal directives. These are reactive motivators which are responses to external stimuli as opposed to proactive motivators that are created and controlled internally by the individual. Feminist will can be defined in a way similar to the definition of early modern feminism—a woman’s will to express and explore her self in relation to society—because, as distinct from modern feminism, the ideology interpellated in early modern feminism is that, through her will, each woman advocates for herself, either in league with or against social motivators. An early modern feminist will proactively expresses and explores a woman’s desires in spite of outside challenges to those desires and the woman’s agency. Implicitly, the emphasis on expressing and exploring one’s self conflicts with patriarchal social codes whose tenants of silence, obedience, and chastity are prescriptions for how a woman *should* express her self. If, as stated in the introduction, will is composed in the mind and therefore is unable to be extracted or seized by an outside force, even oppressed women may privately possess a feminist will, potentially capable of public expression. It is worth reiterating that it is the woman’s attempt to express and explore her *self*, rather than just an agreement with oppressive patriarchal social codes, that establishes a feminist will. Schwarz expands the point that women’s wills need not always disagree with patriarchal

will in order to be considered feminist: “All acts of will, whether constitutive or destructive, share a quality of independent resolve” (40). Consequently, when a woman follows her will she acts independently of an external prevailing authority which may or may not agree with her will. Pamphilia frequently follows her own will yet appears to dutifully follow patriarchal social codes, and the well-timed election of silence, secrecy, and/or misdirection (or discretion) is what enables Pamphilia to do so.

The concept of discretion appears repeatedly in *Urania*. Leandrus’s attempt to manipulate Pamphilia is a prominent example wherein he claims: “love with discretion is the truest love” (Wroth 213). In a later episode, we’re introduced to the Lady of the Oddest Passion who has been in love with two men and meets with them simultaneously as well as separately until her father insists she choose between them. She explains, “It is most true, I am now brought to choose one, for my father will have me marry” (453). In both instances, it seems that discretion will appear in the form of deciding between, separating, or distinguishing, and it does (*OED* “discretion, n.”). However, according to the *OED*, “discretion” in the early modern period had two definitions, the aforementioned and the “liberty or power of deciding, or of acting according to one’s own judgement or as one thinks fit” (“discretion, n.”). The significant difference between the two definitions is that the first is literally the act of distinguishing or separating units of some kind whereas the second refers to the power to decide or elect a particular unit. Both types of discretion are present in *Urania*, but Pamphilia’s discretion-enabled agency incorporates the latter, which includes election. In her article, “Ladies of the Oddest Passion: Early

Modern Women and the Arts of Discretion,” Jacqueline T. Miller deals with similar issues involving discretion:

The suitor describing the [Lady of the Oddest Passion as most loving, most discreet] appears to justify his use of the term by following it with the presumably clarifying and laudatory information that she “judicially carried her hand evenly, when he [the other suitor] kissed one, I had the other, she sate betweene us still, and ever gave us even and indifferent graces,” locating her discretion in her judiciously evenhanded distribution of the signs of her affection, providing no evidence of a preference. (453)

In this instance, “discreet” is the adjective form of “discretion.” At first, the Lady’s discretion seems that it will be in the form of distinguishing between her two lovers and choosing one. However, we quickly begin to realize that the Lady’s discretion will be in the form of her acting according to her own judgement, which becomes troublesome for both the characters and readers when we find out that she refuses to choose between her two lovers. Miller asks:

When the Lady insists on her continuing and equal love for two men and will not discriminate between them, leaving the decision to a passing stranger knight, is she still exercising her discretion or has she relinquished it? To what extent does discretion enable or disable individual agency in a nameless, loving lady who, atypically for her time, is given the opportunity—or is forced—to make her own choice in love but is unable—or refuses—to do so? (455)

The questions Miller brings up reflect the confusion between the assertion that the Lady acts according to her own judgement and simultaneously relinquishes the decision to a passing knight.

If the virtues of chastity, silence, and obedience were concentrated into one idea, it would be the act of being “discreet”: “showing discernment or judgement in the guidance of one's own speech and action; judicious, prudent, circumspect, cautious; often especially that can be silent when speech would be inconvenient” (*OED* “discreet, adj.”). For early modern women, these values fundamentally direct them to be discreet with their bodies, words, and actions. Discretion-driven interaction seems to be the preferred method of interaction even between women in *Urania*. For example, Pamphilia uses discretion when Antissia accuses her of carving the sonnet into the tree. In part, Pamphilia conceals her feelings for Amphilanthus in order to avoid hurting Antissia’s feelings. Pamphilia’s interaction with Leandrus can be viewed in the same light. She does not want to marry Leandrus, and she also does not want to offend him so she keeps her feelings secret and refers him to her father. The use of misdirection in both of these examples signifies that something is happening below the other characters’ thresholds of awareness, and also showcase an implicit element of secrecy in discretion. By extension, “discretion” can be viewed as an individual’s judicious election of secrecy, silence, and to a certain extent misdirection. The Lady of the Oddest Passion’s refusal to decide between her two lovers ends up being a decision in itself. The Lady ultimately uses her discretion, which appears as silence, to subvert the power of the patriarchy (which would have her choose one lover) and assert her own will. Her silence is subversive because she is

explicitly told to choose one lover. This episode is a fitting analogue to Pamphilia's interaction with Leandrus. Both episodes feature a woman who, "atypically for her time," is *given* the opportunity to choose. Leandrus allows Pamphilia the opportunity to freely choose her love, as long as her choice is Leandrus. The Lady's father allows her the opportunity to freely choose her love as well, as long as she chooses between the two men that she loves equally. In both these cases, the man *allows* the woman to decide for herself out of a pool preselected by a man, ultimately undermining the woman's free will and agency. Both Pamphilia and the Lady find a way out of this entrapment by using their discretion, which appears, in both cases, as silence and secrecy. Pamphilia does not tell Leandrus she does not want to marry him, and the Lady refuses to choose between her two lovers. However, in a bittersweet ending, the Lady of the Oddest Passion asserts her agency by refusing to choose and loses both lovers, who decide to leave when she won't choose between them. Ultimately, the wish to express one's will publicly overrides assertions that denial of choice, or denial of authorship in Pamphilia's case, relinquishes claims to agency and, ultimately, the notion of early modern feminism.

Pamphilia explicitly uses discretion to express her self and publicize her work, her carved sonnet and ciphers, while keeping her identity a secret. In "Mary Wroth's Poetics of the Self," Nona Fienberg notes the necessity for early modern women, including Wroth, to use discretion and in particular misdirection in public figurations of self as indicated by use of a metaphor constructed by an unnamed female character in *Urania* (Fienberg 121):

Then was I to worke my end, having no meanes, save mine owne industrie, and strength of mind busied like a Spider, which being to crosse from one beame to another, must worke by waies, and go farre about, making more webs to catch her selfe into her owne purpose, then if she were to goe an ordinary straight course: and so did I, out of my wit weave a web to deceive all, but mine owne desires. (Wroth 293)

The unnamed narrator's "end" is only important insofar as *her* end is a construction of her will. She claims to have no means or authority by which to implement her will, except her own industry and strength of mind. She compares herself to a spider, suggesting that she must go out of her way, "go farre about," and create various fail-safes, "to catch her selfe," in order to implement her will rather than going in an "ordinary straight course." Ultimately, the web is a deception, or a magician's sleight of hand, that misdirects others and enables her to follow her will without notice. This is precisely what Pamphilia does; her virtuous reputation is the web that misdirects others and allows her to implement her will without suspicion. Fienberg sees this phenomenon in Wroth's own writing: "Because early modern society sought to constrain women's writing and power, Wroth's poetry 'worke(s) by waies,' by indirection" (122). Pamphilia uses discretion to allow certain facets of her self to be public. By holding up principles of chastity, silence, and obedience on the surface, Pamphilia creates freedom to do what she wants below the threshold of awareness. Miller comes to this conclusion as well but puts a greater emphasis on a perceived obligation to comply with prevailing social codes:

“Discretion” provides an arena of free activity to the individual. Yet “discretion” also insists on engagement and compliance with prevailing social and moral codes, referring to “the ability to discern or distinguish what is right, befitting, or advisable, especially as regards one’s own conduct of action.” (459)

While I agree with Miller’s conclusion that “discretion provides an arena of free activity to the individual,” I disagree with the notion that the individual is then *required* to engage with prevailing social codes in any meaningful way. That is to say, as is the case with Pamphilia, that an individual might find it necessary to engage with prevailing social codes, but that doesn’t mean that the individual automatically becomes subject to such codes.

The trifecta of will, discretion, and agency denote the appearance of early modern feminism in *Urania*. Of the three, will and discretion operate below the threshold of awareness. Will is a woman’s raw intention and discretion is the wisdom to filter that raw intention. Will and discretion enable the ability or capacity to act or exert power, agency. For example, Pamphilia’s raw intention is to make her poetry public, but she is aware that being viewed as an author would tarnish her reputation. According to Andrea,

As numerous critics have noted, women writers during the English Renaissance were bound by the triple injunction to chastity, silence, and obedience reiterated in contemporary religious sermons, legal codes, educational tracts, and imaginative literature. Analogously situated within a milieu that equates female virtue with silence and female heroism with endurance, Pamphilia is required to conceal her songs and sonnets at the core of the concentric circles—from garden to chamber

to closet to cabinet—that define her identity as an exemplar of the Renaissance woman writer. (335)

Pamphilia's discretion tells her that she should conceal her songs and sonnets, thereby filtering her raw will through discretion. However, Pamphilia realizes she may publicly display her sonnet by carving it into a tree while remaining mostly anonymous and retaining plausible deniability. In light of this means of asserting agency, new meaning is cast on Pamphilia's statement that "discretion it selfe is best," though it is "a cold part of wisdom" (213). The "cold part of wisdom" referred to is the necessity to use discretion, which very frequently meant choosing silence. In this usage, "cold" emphasizes being unimpassioned. This statement is one of the few examples wherein Pamphilia directly expresses disdain at having her speech stifled, and by extension, of Pamphilia criticizing the patriarchal. On the surface, discretion is the stifler of her speech, but patriarchal social codes are structures that require her silence and necessitate the use of discretion and, therefore, become the target of Pamphilia's scorn.

Finally, we can return to Schwarz's questions: "What happens when feminine subjects recognize and participate in the doctrines that govern them? Whose act of will is this?" and "How can volition consummate its own surrender?" (2, 7). There are a few premises implicit in these questions. First, the female subject must be aware of a patriarchal doctrine. Pamphilia cites and even exploits patriarchal conventions when she suggests that Leandrus should approach her father with the proposal rather than her. A second premise is that the conventions themselves reflect the will of the patriarchy. Third, the acceptance or even acquiescence to such conventions is itself a decision and,

therefore, a demonstration of will. These premises lead Schwarz to the final question: “What claims to self-possession does the self-forfeiting subject retain?” (7). As “self-possession” can easily be interpreted as the goal of early modern feminism and the “self-forfeiting subject” can be viewed as a woman who blindly follows patriarchal dictates, this question can be reworded to demonstrate the paradox we’ve been grappling with thus far: what claims to feminism can a woman, specifically Pamphilia, make when she generally appears to follow patriarchal social codes? Furthermore, to what extent can Pamphilia’s will override patriarchal will? In order to answer these questions, we must not assume that compromise necessarily negates one’s will and be open to the possibility that both wills may prevail. In this instance, compromise cannot be viewed as surrender nor do both parties necessarily need to be aware that a compromise is taking place. As evident by her virtuous reputation, Pamphilia frequently compromises her will in relation to the patriarchal will, but without the patriarchy knowing; this does not signify surrender. Schwarz even argues that patriarchal law implies an implicit contract of compromise between the men who create it and the women who are thought to be subject to it: “The gap between decree and execution requires an acquiescence that is deliberate and transactional rather than innate” (3). In other words, women’s compliance is not the effect of a cause/effect equation, rather it is a cause; in which case a superficial reading of *Urania* can be viewed as the effect. On the surface, the patriarchy appears to be the prevailing social structure and women seem to be subject to it. Yet a closer look reveals a structure incapable of enforcing its own will without the acquiescence of women’s wills. The interdependent relationship between patriarchal law and women’s compliance

necessitates a view of women as agents of the social contract rather than merely subject to it.

A new set of problems emerges when this argument is misread to mean women *possess agency over* the social contract, a misinterpretation that suggests women are *enablers* of patriarchal law. This incorrect reading positions women as oppressors of themselves, and would be referred to today as “blaming the victim.” Schwarz cites Elaine Scarry, who addresses the related contradictions of consensual volition:

In general the whole notion of consent stands the distinction between passive and active on its head, since consent theory claims that it is by the will of the apparently passive that the active is brought into being . . . We are initially presented with a problem: here are the governed, subjected to laws; by what route have they been subjugated? We are then presented with a solution: they are not subjugated to the laws; they have willed those laws; they have brought the state into being; they have generated it. This quiets our alarm about subordination, but a moment later inspires a second occasion of bafflement: and now *how* exactly did they do that? To which we are given the answer: by staying still. (quoted in Schwarz 34)

As Scarry states, the suggestion that a passive reaction, such as women’s acquiescence to a patriarchal directive, could simultaneously and equally be the active action that requires such acquiescence is paradoxically baffling and an example of the invalid thinking that propagates blaming the victim. I present the following example as a means to avoid a grotesque misinterpretation of women’s agency in *Urania*. The most accessible example

of blaming the victim concerns rape victims. Frequently, a male rapist will use the excuse that the female he raped was “asking for it” because she was wearing revealing clothing; he is blaming the victim. In this example, “asking for it” is the excuse the man uses to make the woman implicit in her own rape. In modern Western culture, we have deemed this excuse wrong because not only men but all people have control of their desires and are responsible for their own actions. In this scenario, one could even use early modern discourse to suggest that the rape occurred due to a lack of filtering raw will through discretion. This is the primary distinction I’d like to draw: in this example, the woman has no point of compliance with the man’s will, and the man’s will manifests physically. The patriarchal will in *Urania*, however, often opens a port for compliance before affecting women, meaning that there may be some variance in interpretations of a social code without negative effects. So in discussing early modern women who participate in patriarchal doctrine, I draw a strict line between the proactive portion of women’s will and that which women are incapable of affecting beforehand, or the reactive portion. A woman who chooses to comply with or acquiesce in a certain patriarchal social code is no more complicit in creating the code than a woman who chooses to disobey and rebel against the same code; both women are reacting to codes of which they are not primary sources. Limena is *not* responsible for Philargus’s torturing her because she did not comply with the patriarchal marriage conventions. In fact, this physical violence serves to enhance the importance and gravity of women carving out agency, regardless of whether they do so openly or through covert means. Understanding this preemptively discredits an

aggressive application of feminist theory that seeks to view women who find agency only through covert manipulation as decidedly not feminists.

In *Urania*, we frequently see the mindful compromise of women's compliance for the opportunity to affect the outcome of the patriarchy's rules which is precisely what we've been discussing thus far. The use of discretion in the form of electing silence, secrecy, and misdirection allows female characters in *Urania* an avenue to make private desires public expressions while maintaining a virtuous reputation and self-defined identity. Schwarz puts it well in the namesake for this chapter: "Feminine will is itself a curious form of revolution, a refusal of erasure that confers more than subjection on those subjects who work all by themselves" (47). The revolution in *Urania* is "curious," and somewhat confusing to a modern audience, because an early modern feminist will may at once appear to comply with social standards while breaking with them below the threshold of awareness. Fienberg recognizes this as well in Wroth's own writing, "Its strategy of indirection challenges contemporary readers" (122). Pamphilia forges agency through discretion which is the root of such confusion, and the distinction that Wroth highlights which allows a feminist reading of *Urania*. If an aggressive feminist reading necessitates a woman who is vocal in her cause, it is overridden by a woman whose dissent from authority has possible ramifications of physical violence. The passive feminist reading is overridden by the overwhelming evidence that Pamphilia gains agency not by coincidence, but by impressing her will on the patriarchal will. Simply put, it is the fact that Pamphilia makes a conscious effort to *forge* agency that makes her actions feminist.

CHAPTER III

“DID I BOAST OF LIBERTY?”—PAMPHILIA’S CREATION OF IDENTITY

In the previous chapters, I’ve suggested that the strongest desire for many of the female characters in *Urania*, Pamphilia included, is the ability to freely choose love. The attention Mary Wroth pays to this desire cannot be overlooked. Bernadette Andrea goes so far as to say that Wroth “valoriz[es] a woman’s freely chosen love (whether adulterous or not) over the inescapable constraints of aristocratic patriarchal marriage” (337). This desire becomes a driving force for Pamphilia, and arguably a driving force of the entire romance. The role of love in Pamphilia’s life is paramount to understanding how she chooses to use the agency she has forged. The previous chapters have been devoted to the idea that, if we could just peer beneath the surface, then a secret reservoir of complexity will reveal the virtuous Pamphilia as an early modern feminist who forges her own path to agency. My argument thus far has been to show that, in spite of an oppressive patriarchal structure, Pamphilia’s will to express and explore her self in relation to society prevails. When we begin to examine the model by which Pamphilia determines how to implement her agency, something unexpected happens. Pamphilia is so absorbed with being constant to the one she loves, Amphilanthus, that she seems to reject some of the freedom allowed by the agency she has forged. Examining Pamphilia’s vision of love will

reveal the tenants that comprise the proactive portion of her will and in turn shape her identity, which may at first appear to, ironically, supplant patriarchal tyranny with the tyranny of love. However, Pamphilia's strict adherence to her own vision of love creates her unique identity and agency, which is what exists below the threshold of awareness.

As modern readers, we might not initially feel as removed from Pamphilia's idea of love as we do from the conventions of aristocratic patriarchal marriage. The power of love motivates, and has motivated, every type of artistic media. This phrase, "the power of love," has become a cliché found in countless pop songs, comedies and contemporary literatures, but today we don't as frequently hear love's power referred to in such pointedly oppressive terms as *Urania's* "Uncertaine Tyrant Love," the "unrightfull Monarchy of love," and in a shepherd's song "Love farewell I now discover/ Thee a tyrant o're a lover" (Wroth 124, 183, 569). These descriptors of love at its worst mimic those of a corrupt sociopolitical system with unwarranted powers, suggesting that anything with too much power, including love, may have negative effects.

The scars of a social system that for an individual's entire life denies her the right to choose for herself are evident in all aspects of life. In a soliloquy that first reveals her feelings for Amphilanthus, Pamphilia personifies love as a tyrant and asks for an explanation for her pain:

"Alas," would she say (weeping to herself), "what have I deserved to bee thus tyrannically tortured by love? and in his most violent course, to whom I have ever been a most true servant? Had I wrong'd his name, scornd his power, or his might, then I had been justly censured to punishment: but ill Kings, the more they see

obedience, tread the more upon their subjects; so doth this all conquering King. O love, look but on me, my heart is thy prey, my self thy slave, then take some pity on me.” (Wroth 62)

In contrast to the discretion she exercises when she interacts with other people, Pamphilia’s words are straightforward and revealing when no one is around. She is obviously tormented by the love of Amphilanthus, which due to inconstancy he doesn’t always reciprocate. Just prior to this section, Amphilanthus “gave so much commendations of Antissia,” for a time Pamphilia’s rival (61). Yet Pamphilia blames love “himself” rather than Amphilanthus’s inconstancy for her pain. The last line of Pamphilia’s soliloquy can be read as her promise of devotion to love, much like a promise of fidelity to one’s country, ruler, or God. Most importantly, however, Pamphilia doesn’t feel she’s being tortured by love because she has chosen to love the wrong man or because she hasn’t revealed her love for Amphilanthus: “They [being] gone, Pamphilia alone began to breath out her passions, which to none shee would discover, resolving rather so to perish, then that any third should know shee could be subject to affection” (62). Pamphilia feels that love would be just in torturing someone who committed a crime against love, “Had I wrong’d his name, scornd his power, or his might, then I had been justly censured to punishment” (62). Instead she attributes the torture to her extreme dedication to love who, like a king with too much power, takes advantage of the most obedient. Pamphilia’s obedience to love is evident in the way she speaks about it. Much later in the romance, after reading a book on the subject of love, Pamphilia defends it from what she sees as a misrepresentation:

“Poore love,” said the Queene[Pamphilia], “how doth all storys, and every writer use thee at their pleasure, apparrelling thee according to their various fancies? canst thou suffer thy selfe to be thus put in cloathes, nay raggs instead of vertuous habits? punish such Traytors, and cherrish mee thy loyall subject who will not so much as keepe thy injuries neere me” (317).

Pamphilia feels that the book exploits love and portrays love as something it's not. She feels that people who do this should be punished by love, and that love should reward and protect her for being a loyal subject. The radical change from feeling tortured by love to suggesting that love itself is being tortured through misrepresentation shows the complexity of Pamphilia's vision of love which, to a modern reader, might seem more like Stockholm Syndrome than a healthy idea of love. Another facet of Pamphilia's vision of love is revealed in the narrator's synopsis of the aforementioned book:

The story she then was reading, the affection of a Lady to a brave Gentleman, who equally loved, but being a man, it was necessary for him to exceede a woman in all things, so much as inconstancie was found fit for him to excell her in, hee left her for a new. (317)

This synopsis is a tongue-in-cheek analogue to Pamphilia's account of her and Amphilanthus's relationship, a constant woman and an inconstant man.

The role of constancy for Pamphilia is key to understanding what structures the identity she's created. The *OED* defines “constancy” as, “steadfastness of attachment to a person or cause; faithfulness, fidelity” (“constancy, n.”). Pamphilia's constancy in love translates as unyielding fidelity to Amphilanthus. The virtues of constancy and chastity

are similar but not the same and reveal an interesting ideological shift between Medieval and Renaissance society. The virtue of chastity denotes the physical intactness of a woman's body, and the Medieval notion was that there was intrinsic and economic value in an untouched woman's body. The virtue of constancy denotes the "intactness" and strength of a woman's resolve. Taken one way, constancy is nearly synonymous with chastity and means that a woman stays faithful to the man she marries, whether by choice or force. Taken another way, constancy refers to a woman's resolved fidelity to the one she loves—according to Wroth's interpretation in *Urania*, regardless of whether she is married to him or not. In this regard, Limena remains inwardly constant to Perissus even though she briefly marries Philargus, meaning that Limena's resolve to love Perissus stays intact. In *Urania*, there are many opinions and discussions regarding the issue of constancy in marriage and relationships, but over all constancy is seen as a virtue for women as distinct from men for whom constancy is not necessary to be considered virtuous. In the introduction to *Urania*, Josephine Roberts discusses Amphilanthus's attitude:

Wroth devotes the greatest attention to Amphilanthus' opinions on constancy, which she exposes for their ironic contradictions. On the one hand, he praises constancy as "the onely perfect vertue" (135.15), but he is ever changing in his affections and fails to match his words and deeds. (Wroth lix)

Luckily for Amphilanthus, constancy isn't a man's virtue. Men are excused from this virtue as Musalina describes, "the kindest, lovingst, passionatest, worthiest, loveliest, valiantest, sweetest, and best man, will, and must change, not that he, it may bee, doth it

purposely, but tis their naturall infirmitie, and cannot be helped” (440). The characters in *Urania* recognize Pamphilia’s constancy. Unlike some of her other virtuous traits, Pamphilia’s constancy is not merely a superficial appearance. Pamphilia is constant at her core. Yet not having told Amphilanthus of her constancy to him, Pamphilia actually appears to be constant to love itself. Pamphilia’s extreme constancy makes her appear to be subject to love. This occurs because constancy, as desire, is a faculty of will. Pamphilia’s resolve to be constant is what motivates and drives her will forward. As discussed in chapter two, a woman’s identity is created based on the proactive motivations of her will. As we’ll see, constancy is a defining element of Pamphilia’s identity. Pamphilia believes that only through constancy can one secure true love, Pamphilia’s strongest desire. Together constancy and idealized love constitute the proactive components of Pamphilia’s will. However, Pamphilia positions love in such a way that it’s difficult to tell whether she has power over love or whether love has power over her, which raises the question of whether love is a proactive part of her will or a predetermined response.

The complications of love’s having more power than Pamphilia is that she loses agency. If Pamphilia is just love’s puppet, then her demonstrated will, discretion, and agency don’t belong to her—the very position she would have Leandrus view her as occupying. We will return to Pamphilia and Leandrus’s conversation regarding discretion one final time in order to show that, at least to Leandrus, Pamphilia does not claim to be more powerful than love. During their discussion in the garden, Leandrus asks, with a bit of sarcasm that later turns to irony, ““Why? Are you not,’ cryd Leandrus, ‘soveraigne of

your selfe by Judgement, yeares and authoritie, unlimited by fortunes, by government, and the love of your Parents, which will goe with you in my choice?” (Wroth 214). In many ways Pamphilia is, in fact, “sovereigne of [her]selfe by Judgement,” insofar as she has an ability to subvert the patriarchal social codes through the use of discretion.

However, Pamphilia and Leandrus’s discussion about discretion in love, seen earlier in this chapter, suggests that Pamphilia feels she is unable to use her discretion in regard to love which, if true, would render Pamphilia’s discretion-enabled agency ineffectual.

Leandrus first proposes an idea: “Love with discretion is the truest love” (213).

According to the idea of discretion explored in the previous chapter and Leandrus’s usage of “discretion” in chapter one, Leandrus’s intended meaning seems to be that self-elected love is the truest love, or as Miller defines it is, “a judicious choice in love” (463). Most likely, the female characters that resist arranged marriages in *Urania*, such as Limena, would agree with Leandrus that love is truest when elected. However, Pamphilia, one who has forged the agency to freely elect her love, surprisingly disagrees. She says:

Discretion it selfe is best: but if love come wholly to be governd by [discretion], that wil have so great a power, as love will loose name and rule [. . .] therefore my Lord Leandrus, by your favour, I must say, I thinke you erre in this, and in the truth of love, which is a supreme power (Wroth 213).

With a hint of sarcasm, Pamphilia tells Leandrus that the power of discretion could not overcome the power of love if the love were true. It follows that, in Pamphilia’s opinion, true love has a power greater than discretion’s. Yet Pamphilia’s agency is enabled by her discretion, which means her power comes from her ability to use discretion. If her power

lies in her discretion and true love is more powerful than discretion, then Pamphilia must be less powerful than love, a realization that highlights the sarcasm of her statement because not only is love with discretion not best, love with discretion is impossible, according to this view. Pamphilia's statement seems sarcastic because she extends her argument by drawing out the absurdities in the idea that the "supreme power" of love could be overcome by simple discretion: "love will loose name, and rule, and the other, [discretion, will gain power] for riches, or other baser things, shall prevaile against the sweetest passion, and only blisse, which is enjoying" (213). Pamphilia means that if discretion could govern love, then love would not exist, "lose name," and in turn "baser" things would usurp love. Pamphilia's sarcasm is deepened by the beginning of her statement, in which she appears to agree with Leandrus: "Discretion it selfe is best." Pamphilia's response exactly contradicts Leandrus's statement but because of discretion, she at first appears to agree. If what Pamphilia suggests is correct, then she is saying that true love is not elected and she did not rationally *choose* to love Amphilanthus. Furthermore, and perhaps more interesting to the matter at hand, Pamphilia's positioning of love in this light demonstrates the absurdity in the notion that the will of the patriarchy could overcome the supreme power of love. If Pamphilia truly means what she is saying to Leandrus, then she must feel that the power of love will prevail regardless of outside circumstances and that the will of the patriarchy is merely an inconvenience on the way to love's end. When we then return to Leandrus's question to Pamphilia, the irony becomes obvious, "'Why? Are you not,' cryd Leandrus, 'soveraigne of your selfe by Judgement yeares and authoritie, unlimited by fortunes, by government,

and the love of your Parents, which will goe with you in my choice” (214). The irony is twofold: [1] Pamphilia has already answered this question, and [2] she is not sovereign of herself. According to the terms used, this question could be restated as, “Are you not the supreme ruler over your discretion?” We know from her previous statements that Pamphilia’s answer is a resounding no: love is the supreme ruler over her discretion. However, remaining discreet, Pamphilia says, “these [her fortune, country, and parents] still are but the threads that tie my dutie” (214). Her authority, unlimited by fortunes, government, and the love of her parents, are the threads that tie her to her duty, but we know her duty is to Love. Leandrus replies, “‘But if they consent,’ said he, ‘wil you eternise my happinesse with your agreeing?’” (214). In this context “they” is the misinterpretation of Pamphilia’s meaning of duty as her duty to her parents rather than her duty to love. At this point, Leandrus’s misunderstanding turns into comic irony, and Pamphilia, most likely annoyed with his inability take a hint, quickly excuses herself, “Give me leave first” (214).

Jacqueline Miller’s analysis of the final words of Pamphilia’s argument reasserts Pamphilia’s point that love is a supreme power: “In fact, according to the final words of Pamphilia’s argument, [Yet is his judgement such, as hee makes discretion shine through all his acts; but how? as a servant to his greater power], Love employs and even exploits discretion” (Miller 464, Wroth 214). This creates a hierarchy wherein, under normal circumstances, an individual has the power to use discretion. When that individual is genuinely in love, love overtakes the power to use discretion. Pamphilia illustrates this by saying, “as if your heart should command your tongue, to deliver what it thinkes, but

discreetly to do it so, as offence may not proceede from it: here is discretion, and yet the tongue is but the hearts messenger” (Wroth 214). In this analogy, the power of love is further explained. Love, a passion centered in the heart, has the ability to tell the tongue, which should be governed by reason, what to say and to do so discreetly. Love implements discretion in the same way that Pamphilia does. In this quotation, love is more than just a judge, rather love uses discretion to render the private identity fit for public presentation. So even though, as in Pamphilia’s case, one may be compelled to share songs, poems, and feelings, love uses discretion to protect its subject from revealing too much to the wrong person. This seems evident when Antissia confronts Pamphilia about Amphilanthus. Even though Pamphilia had just carved her sonnet lamenting Amphilanthus into the tree, an obviously painful and saddening subject, Pamphilia does not admit to Antissia whom it is she loves or that she loves at all, “for many Poets write aswell by imitation, as by sence of passion,” alluding instead to Philip Sidney’s argument in *Defence of Poesie* about inferior poets for whom, “Poesy therefore is an art of imitation” (Sidney 9, Wroth 94). On one hand, Pamphilia so desperately wants to express her feelings that she carves them into a tree. On the other hand, Pamphilia cannot bring herself to admit to Antissia that she loves Amphilanthus because of the risk of the possible fallout from such a confession—an indication of discretion at work. Pamphilia might say that this is an example of Love making discretion “shine through all his acts.” However, given Pamphilia’s proclivity for disguising her true meaning, two new questions present themselves: Does Pamphilia really believe that love controls her rather

than her controlling love? What potential benefits are there from appearing to be a subject to love?

Pamphilia makes a compelling case that love tops the hierarchy of power rather than herself. Yet she makes this case to Leandrus, which should make us immediately suspect that she is concealing the truth through misdirection. The benefits of appearing to be out of control mean that you don't have to be responsible for your actions. Both Pamphilia's poetry and love share the element of secrecy and misdirection. Through discretion, Pamphilia finds external outlets for both, the sonnet carved into the tree, the cipher, and even telling Leandrus her thoughts on love with discretion. However, these only add up to coded messages, things that may later be deciphered with specialized knowledge. Perissus deciphers Pamphilia's cipher, and Antissia recognizes Pamphilia's sonnet. The method by which Pamphilia uses discretion to encode her message for the outside world is permeable. The reason for encoding a message is for someone to decode it, not for it to remain secret. In essence, an encoded message is a defense that merely creates plausible deniability in case the wrong individual decodes it. Readers can find the necessary specialized knowledge hidden within *Urania* to decode not just ciphers but also the wholly virtuous façade of Pamphilia. Even with this specialized knowledge, whether or not Pamphilia controls love or love controls Pamphilia is nearly impossible to decipher. At a foundational level, it is a question of whether love is an external or internal force, a reactive or proactive facet of Pamphilia's will. There are compelling arguments for each.

I do not want to admit that love controls Pamphilia. It would mean that the oppressive patriarchy was merely supplanted by the Tyrant of Love, and Pamphilia's feminist characteristics would again be called into question. However, I find that the following evidence cannot be ignored. First, even though we are suspicious of Pamphilia telling Leandrus and, as we'll shortly find out, the character Urania that love is a supreme power, Pamphilia also positions love as a supreme power when she is alone as evident by her soliloquy after Amphilanthus leaves, her private description of the book she doesn't like, and her carved sonnet as well as countless other poems not mentioned herein. Pamphilia's treatment of love as a supreme power when she is alone strongly suggests that she literally believes love is a supreme power. On the other hand, one may interpret this dependence on love as a physiological response which, somewhat unsatisfactorily, opens the argument that the love Pamphilia feels is a hormonal response happening *within* her and, therefore, is evidence that she has, at a basic level, power over love. I don't find either side of this argument particularly persuasive.

The second, and most compelling, piece of evidence that suggests love has power over Pamphilia is the presence of enchantments in *Urania*. The character Urania undergoes the first enchantment at the Throne of Love in which she falls in love with Parselius: "She, I say, when all were gone to rest, stood as Sentinel, but by her owne appointment, love commanding her soule to take no advantage of restfull houres; which she obediently did, sleep never but by loves liberty possessing her eies" (Wroth 46). In this enchantment, Urania is literally possessed by love—"love commanding her soule" and "loves liberty possessing her eies"—it is not until the enchantment is broken when

Urania and Parselius are thrown into the sea that she stops being in love with Parselius: “Urania's desires were [then] no other, then to goe into Italy to see her father” (230). In a second enchantment, Pamphilia and many of the other central characters become trapped in an Enchanted Theater: “The sweetest musicke, and most inchanting harmony of voyces, so overruld their sences, as they thought no more of any thing, but went up, and sate downe in the chayers. The gate was instantly lock'd againe” (373). During the enchantment, Pamphilia’s eyes are forced to watch Amphilanthus with Antissia, suggesting hers is a fatalistic sense of love, “Her eies not in the absence of her heart turning to any other lower then the top of the roome, and there staid by the rooffe, not with desire to behold any thing but her love” (421). The enchantment is finally broken when “Apollo appear'd, commanding Veralinda [the virtuous character] to touch them [all the assembled lovers] with a rod he threw her down; she did so when they all awaked” (455). These enchantments are evidence that, in *Urania*, outside forces exist that can control the body and mind, making it only a small leap to suggest that Pamphilia may be possessed by a love enchantment for the duration of the first volume of *Urania*.

However, if this is true, then we should also assume that Wroth forgot to mention that Pamphilia is enchanted, a major plot piece, because she was forthright with the other enchantments. Also, Pamphilia’s criticism of people who, “apparrell [love] according to their various fancies,” reveals a problem with the argument that Pamphilia is possessed by a love enchantment throughout *Urania* (317). The love the enchanted characters feel for one another is forced on them by those who created the enchantments, who have equivalently “put [love] in cloathes, nay raggs instead of vertuous habits” (317). Based

on arguments in the previous chapters, Pamphilia would say that the enchantment is not true love because it is love one person has forced onto another rather than an organic love. On a metanarrative level, the question of whether Wroth meant for Pamphilia's notion of love to be the ideal love within the narrative or whether Wroth's notion, itself, is flawed in the same manner as those who dress love up according to their needs is impossible to parse. However, both Pamphilia's private treatment of love and the enchantments, point towards the notion that love is an external force, a reactive influence on Pamphilia's will, and consequently an oppressor rather than a means to self-identification.

In spite of this limited evidence otherwise, I maintain that Pamphilia's vision of love is one of her own creation and a proactive, self-defining facet of her will. Since Pamphilia's primary means of challenging patriarchal social codes comes in the form of poetry, it's a natural step to consider the messages contained within her poetry at a metanarrative level. Like a Petrarchan lover, Pamphilia suffers from unrequited love, loves love for love's sake, and nearly transforms the one she loves, Amphilanthus, into an idol. These elements are present in her carved sonnet, but are also explicitly stated to Urania by Pamphilia during their conversation about constancy:

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 himselfe, and would have loved him had hee not loved mee, and will love though he dispise me; this is true love. (470)

In spite of Amphilanthus's inconstant feelings for her, Pamphilia will continue to love him because, if she didn't, then she couldn't justly call it love in the first place. That Pamphilia positions herself as a Petrarchan lover is an interesting appropriation of a masculine archetype which returns in the sonnet sequence published with *Urania*, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* (Roberts 85-142). Furthermore, her adaptation of this position denotes a quest for love in the sense of correctly understanding love and remaining constant to the one she loves. Both the appropriation of the Petrarchan lover archetype and the quest for love are active roles that require Pamphilia to use her discretion-enabled agency. Pamphilia cannot simply write a poem and hand it to an audience, she must find covert means to an audience. She is also unsatisfied by the idea that one may choose whom to love, although, by extension, all types of arranged marriages cannot work under Pamphilia's configuration of love. Pamphilia's quest to understand and define love leads to the personification of love. That is, the personification of love becomes, as it has been used by poets for centuries, a device for Pamphilia to use to explore her poetic voice as well as love itself, positioning love as an internal force and proactive, self-defining facet of Pamphilia's will. What I suggest is that Pamphilia's personification of love as a tyrant can coexist with an independent, feminist Pamphilia as a part of her identity. Furthermore, her resolve to remain constant to love is exactly that, a resolve, a strength of character and will. Pamphilia's constancy and quest for love create agency. She has allowed herself the room to explore and express what most interests her, love, and through her constancy is able to control her relationship to that exploration. Through her discretion, she is able to render her private identity fit for

public presentation. Roberts comes to the same conclusion in the introduction to *Urania*: “Pamphilia’s constancy becomes an ‘act of willful self-definition,’ by which she creates an authority that is uniquely her own” (Wroth lx). After examining Pamphilia’s will, discretion, and agency, I feel it is necessary to conclude that Pamphilia possesses the traits of and *is* the early modern feminist defined in the introduction.

CONCLUSION

When I began this project, I nurtured the blind ambition to create an all-encompassing, intuitive method of discussing feminism in early modern texts, a sentiment whose light still lingers dimly in my introduction. As I delved into my research, I quickly refocused my venture to include only feminist themes which appear in *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*. Shortly thereafter, I narrowed my purpose further to only cover Pamphilia's feminist characteristics in the first volume of *Urania*, a large undertaking itself. In the previous chapters, I've discussed Pamphilia's feminist characteristics by revealing and demonstrating her agency, her use of discretion, and her will's role in creation of identity. I have also suggested that the trifecta of will, discretion, and agency in *Urania* denotes the presence of "early modern feminism": a woman's will to express and explore her self in relation to society. I suspect that the liberties I've taken in defining early modern feminism will arouse further discourse; I do not shrink from this, either. The prerequisite to understand what constitutes a woman's will before suggesting whether she is a feminist or not is necessary due to the divide between women's private and public lives. As we've witnessed, Pamphilia very infrequently speaks her mind. I call on this common expression—speak your mind—in order to highlight the lack of unfiltered feminine voices in *Urania*. The definition of early modern

feminism that has emerged in this study directs readers' attention towards what is going on below the threshold of awareness, where Pamphilia's early modern feminist will resides. Furthermore, the tacit signifiers of the divide between public and private lives—silence, secrecy, and misdirection—implicate the use of discretion-based agency, meaning that Pamphilia's displays of agency are a rendering of her will through discretion to make it fit for public presentation. Pamphilia does all of this, weaves a web of misdirection, in order to find both public and private spaces to express and explore her self. And that there is a "self" to present at all is really the triumph of Pamphilia's identity, Wroth as an author, and early modern feminism.

As I review the main points I hope this work has conveyed, and contrary to my warning against it in the introduction, it seems significant to return tentatively to the analogue between the character, Pamphilia, and the historical figure, Lady Mary Wroth. Both suggest questions relevant to the concept of early modern feminism though these need not engage fully in a debate regarding *Urania's* being autobiographical.

Lady Mary Wroth, born Mary Sidney, was forced into an arranged marriage with Sir Robert Wroth II although she was in love with her cousin and childhood friend, William Herbert (Hannay xii). Pamphilia similarly faced an arranged marriage to Leandrus but, as seen above, narrowly avoided it in favor of her love for Amphilanthus, her cousin. Pamphilia, like Wroth, channels her unrequited love into artistic endeavors. Margaret Hannay comments on experiences in Wroth's life that recall Pamphilia's:

Lady Mary Wroth's experience of an arranged marriage to a man she did not love, and perhaps had not even known before the negotiations began, was not unusual

for her time and social class; some of these marriages were successful, but many were not. What commands our attention is the way Wroth transmuted her emotional suffering into art. (105)

Wroth, like Pamphilia, had a difficult decision to make regarding how to circulate her art; publishing was not only unbefitting of a woman but of aristocrats, and Wroth of course was both. Ironically, Pamphilia's fear of the fallout from her poetry being discovered by the wrong person (i.e., the purpose for exercising discretion-enabled agency) is precisely what Wroth had to deal with in light of some of the negative receptions of *Urania*. As discussed in chapter two, the disconnect between writing and authorship raises questions applicable to both Pamphilia and Wroth: what does it mean for Wroth and Pamphilia to have written at all? what does it mean for Wroth to have been published in her lifetime and for Pamphilia's work to have been read by others in her lifetime? Nearly every question we've asked about Pamphilia can be transposed to Wroth. From the introduction with regards to Wroth's position in the Sidney family: is it fair to suggest that *Wroth* could be feminist rather than merely an exception due to her privilege? From chapter two with regards to Wroth's arranged marriage: what claims to self-possession does a self-forfeiting subject retain? Just consideration of these questions draws a connection between fictionalized early modern feminism and what we might call *actual* early modern feminism. These considerations lead to the crux of whether we may consider Lady Mary Wroth, like Pamphilia, an early modern feminist. As with Limena above, the complexity of the crux cannot be resolved simply by comparing Wroth's real life presence to Pamphilia's fictionalized one. However, a similarly structured analysis

following up on this study could investigate whether Wroth's early modern feminist characteristics and behaviors are as evident as Pamphilia's.

As this project draws to a conclusion, I cannot help but daydream about my initial ambition. While I may not have revolutionized methods of discussing feminism in early modern texts, I have demonstrated how a method for discussing early modern feminism may be implemented in the case of a single, significant character, Pamphilia. But even this is not without some anticipated shortcomings as enumerated below. I do not view these shortcomings as faults of this thesis, but rather an opportunity to continue my research on feminism, early modern texts, *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, and Lady Mary Wroth. First, additional discussion of early modern feminism should be broadened to include multiple texts from various authors. Only then will one have the breadth necessary to reevaluate and define early modern feminism beyond the instance of Pamphilia. Second, there appears to be a need for conventional language to use while navigating through early modern texts in search of early modern feminism and its various forms and expressions. Throughout my research process, I persistently observed that scholarly authors lacked a conventional language for discussing early modern feminism, in my mind a major shortcoming of feminist criticism. I find this a fault not because discussion of early modern feminism is impossible but because the discourse is stifled by the necessity to [1] specifically contrast, differentiate, and validate early modern feminism from modern feminism, and [2] define terms to the point of lexical dissonance, both problems easily exemplified within my own work. I don't foresee any quick fix for this problem. In fact, the only fix may be to continue stumbling through and expanding

feminist analyses of early modern texts until a conventional language for discussing early modern feminism synthesizes without formal moderation. My long-term goal is to contribute to the cultivation of such a language which may be, one day, deconstructed and rendered extraneous by other critics, solidifying my relevance in academia and allowing me to begin my next great undertaking.

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VITA

Rose Ann Verstynen was born in Austin, Texas on July 15, 1985, the daughter of Patricia Ann Finney and Richard Almond Verstynen. After graduating from Elgin High School in 2003, she entered Texas State University-San Marcos. In summer 2010, She received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English with an emphasis in Creative Writing from Texas State. She entered the Graduate College of Texas State the following fall.

Permanent Address: 145 McAcres Drive

McDade, Texas 78650

This thesis was typed by Rose A. Verstynen.