

Introduction

The Other Voice

Mary Wroth (1587–1651), author of the first collection of secular lyrics written and published by an English woman, an elaborate two-part romance, and a play, is the preeminent early modern English woman writer. Her sonnet sequence, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, comprises the archetypal “other voice,” a female voice speaking in a genre that in England had been the exclusive domain of male writers. Every edition influences the way we read. This edition presents both the well-known printed text of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, reproduced as it appeared in 1621, and Wroth’s other voice—the erotic, daring voice of a woman writing manuscript poems for herself, her lover, and her intimate friends. Wroth’s imaginative scope and keen critical intelligence can be fully grasped only by reading and comparing the two sequences. Wroth’s autograph manuscript, printed here for the first time, explores the joys and complications of a passionate, clandestine love affair that is still discernible, though veiled by Wroth’s revisions, excisions, and reorganization, in the printed text. The two versions of “Pamphilia to Amphilanthus” illuminate the historical transition from manuscript to print, calling into question some of our most fundamental assumptions about Wroth’s poetry and expanding our understanding of early modern English women. Wroth’s private poetry and careful revisions complicate paradigms of early modern English women writers derived from print, and ally Wroth with women writing erotic love poetry on the continent.¹

Art and Life

The present volume brings together for the first time in one volume two equally authorial but distinct versions of Wroth’s poetry. Wroth’s manuscript poetry has never appeared in print and has been readily available online only since 2012. Consequently, assumptions about her poetry have been derived from the printed text, which looks like a conventional Petrarchan tale of transcendent, unrequited love, though told from an unprecedented female point of view. The emotional core of Wroth’s private manuscript poetry emerges not only from Renaissance literary tradition, but also from life as an early modern woman. The challenge and imaginative liberation of speaking and acting against dominant gender norms;

1. I am grateful to Anne Lake Prescott for calling my attention to the parallel between Wroth and her Continental counterparts. For connections between Wroth and Louise Labé, see Prescott’s essay, “Mary Wroth, Louise Labé, and Cupid,” *SJ* 15 (1997): 37–40.

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the misery of a distasteful, arranged marriage; the joys, risks, and ethics of conducting a premarital or extramarital love affair before the advent of reliable birth control; the force and vicissitudes of sexual pleasure; the happiness and fear of having and possibly losing a child in or out of wedlock: These preoccupations impel Wroth's private poetry and are still present, as a discreetly veiled subtext, in the bowdlerized, printed sequence.

Wroth's original, private lyric dialogue can still be heard in the propulsive persuasive energy that courses through her manuscript poems, urging her lover, her family, and her intimate friends to hear her point of view and come to her aid. Their responses, whether written or heard, anticipated, incorporated, or rebutted, can be gleaned from elocutionary cues embedded in her songs and sonnets. Wroth's earlier, unexpurgated songs and sonnets show her to be a greater poet—more psychologically insightful, verbally sophisticated, and boldly original—than editors and critics realized. The carefully curated, reconceptualized, printed edition of 1621 shows her to be a more self-reflexive and critically astute writer than her conventional poetic tropes might suggest. When the two extant sonnet sequences are read in light of each other, as this edition invites readers to do, the 1621 printed text becomes even more inventive and intriguing, imbued with ambiguities and obliquities that mask and diffuse the torrid, tormented love affair enacted in Wroth's manuscript poems.

To grasp the differences between the two extant versions of Wroth's poetry one needs to pay extremely close attention to details of language; to work through the multiple, sometimes contradictory meanings that make her lexicon and syntax so challenging; to peer into ellipses and tease out ambiguities; to look for elocutionary cues that signal the dramatic situation, private lyric audience, and persuasive purpose; to ponder the ways groups of poems interact with, shape, and reshape each other; and to reexamine the literary devices (abstraction, allegory, ambiguity, amphibology, apostrophe, *copia*, circumlocution, contradiction, enigma, interruption, irony, metaphor, metonymy, paradox, uncertainty, and many more) that revitalize seemingly conventional tropes.

Wroth's autograph manuscript, Folger Manuscript V.a.104, contains 117 songs and sonnets with numerous, multistage revisions. Transcribed by Wroth in her confident italic script, it is a lovely, small quarto, the perfect size to hold in one's hand. The rewritten, expurgated, and significantly reordered printed collection of 103 poems appears in a separately numbered section at the end of Wroth's romance, *The Countesse of Mountgomerie Urania*, an elegant folio published in 1621 while Wroth was still alive—the only time Wroth's poetry and romance appeared in print until the twentieth century.²

To be sure, there is a great deal of overlap between the manuscript and printed texts, but there are also notable differences that emerge when one looks

2. Mary Wroth, *The Countesse of Mountgomerie Urania* (London, 1621).

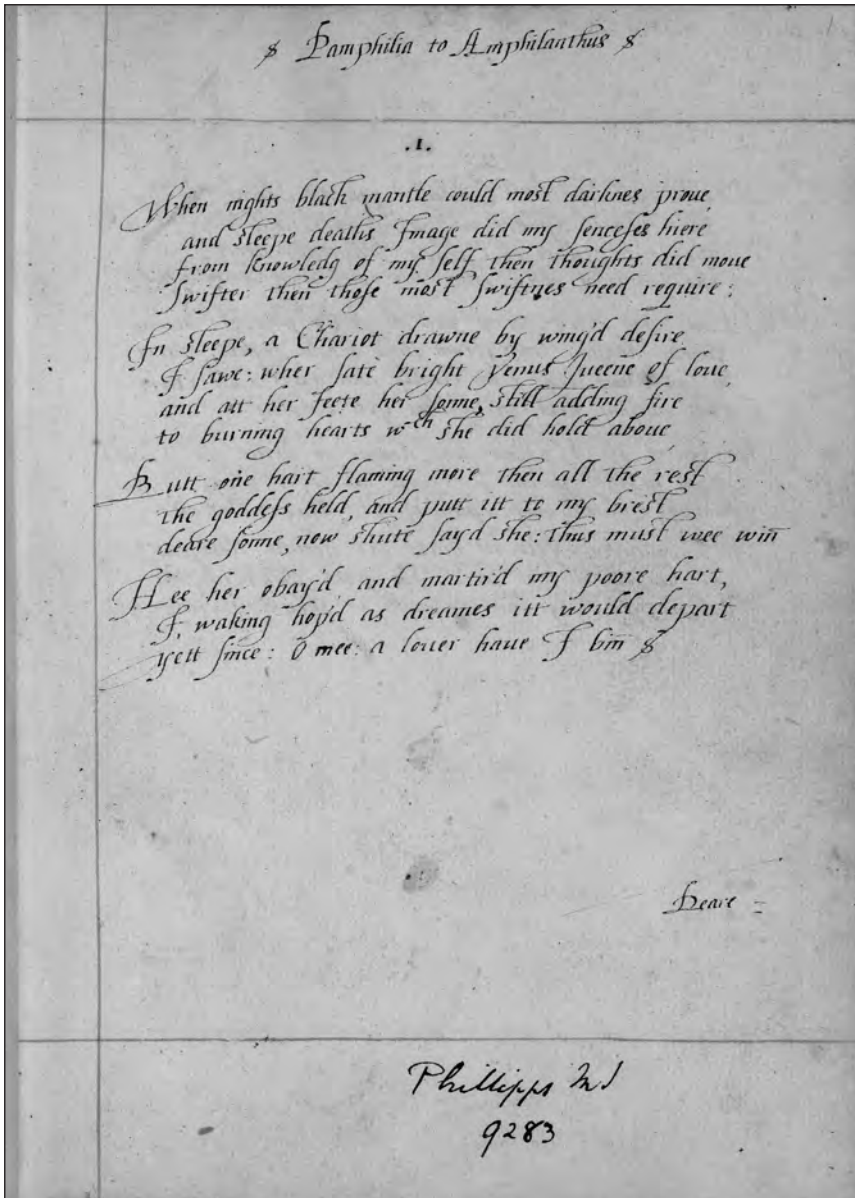


Figure 1. The first page, following the title page, of Wroth's autograph manuscript, MS V.a.104, fol. 1r. Reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC. Formerly owned by Sir Thomas Phillipps and cited as MS 9283 in *Catalogus Librorum Manuscriptorum in Bibliotheca D. Thomae Phillipps Bart.* (1837), p. 147.

more closely. When Wroth revised a key word, or eliminated a reference to Venus, goddess of love, or removed the aubade in which Pamphilia awakens Amphilanthus after a night of lovemaking, or transposed a poem from a moment of intimacy to a period of separation and jealousy, she not only reconceived individual poems but also transformed the meaning and purpose of the collection. To avoid potential disapproval and censorship, she removed six poems including the aubade, moved nine poems to fictionalized contexts in *Urania*, added one new poem to steer readers' expectations of what is to come, and shuffled the remaining poems to veil but not entirely undo her radical challenge to literary and social convention.

Wroth's process of revision involved: 1) altering key words and phrases in her autograph manuscript collection (MS V.a.104); 2) identifying and removing poems that were too transgressive or problematic to be easily reshaped by changing key words; 3) repositioning the remaining poems (in a lost manuscript that became the basis of the printed text) in order to obscure or repurpose the unfolding drama that propelled her private poetry. All told, Wroth's alterations, cuts, and reorganization make the 1621 printed text more abstract and generalized, and more socially acceptable for an early modern woman writer.

Earlier drafts of Wroth's poems no longer exist, but she probably composed individual lyrics, or short groups of lyrics, on loose sheets or gatherings of paper, which she revised and polished before copying them neatly onto the pages that constitute Folger MS V.a.104. The highly wrought, formal structure of eight groups of six sonnets with a consistent rhyme scheme, each followed by a song (the eighth group of six sonnets has no song), culminates in the signature "Pamphilia" surrounded by four *fermesses* (\$\$\$\$), indicating that the first fifty-five poems originally constituted a separate sonnet sequence.

The following shorter groups of consecutively numbered or unnumbered songs or sonnets suggest that MS V.a.104 is a composite collection of poems and groups of poems written at different times.³ The current binding is not original, so it is difficult to know how or when Wroth assembled the separately numbered groups of poems and then either recopied them or bound them together into MS V.a.104 before rethinking and reconceiving the entire collection to suit a wider public audience.

Wroth's manuscript collection, cited here as "Pamphilia to Amphilanthus" to distinguish it from the printed text, appears first because it was written first,

3. For more detailed descriptions of the material make-up of the Folger manuscript, see Gavin Alexander, "Constant Works: A Framework for Reading Mary Wroth," *SJ* 14 (1996–1997), 5–32, Heather Dubrow, "And Thus Leave Off': Reevaluating Mary Wroth's Folger Manuscript, V.a.104," *TSWL* 22 (2003): 273–91, and Margaret P. Hannay, "The 'Ending End' of Lady Mary Wroth's Manuscript of Poems," *SJ* 31 (2013): 1–22. The paratextual signifiers discussed in these essays have as yet to be applied to a close reading of the poems themselves.

because it deserves to be read as Wroth transcribed and then revised it—free, insofar as possible, from modern assumptions about Wroth and other early modern women writers derived from print—and finally, because Wroth’s revisions, deletions, and reorganization cast her later printed sequence in a fascinating new light. The 1621 printed version of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, differentiated here by the italicized title, also appears in its entirety because it is important in its own right, as the rich scholarly tradition it has inspired demonstrates. This edition corrects manifest printer’s errors but otherwise leaves the printed text intact so that readers who have come to love and admire the 1621 sequence can see it afresh, without the distinctive spelling and punctuation that Josephine Roberts’s 1983 edition imported from the manuscript.

Wroth was lauded as a writer both during her lifetime and soon after her death, as we shall see in more detail later, but her writing was then all but lost to English literary history for over three centuries, until Gary F. Waller published his path-breaking 1977 edition of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*.⁴ The 1621 sequence has appeared in print several times since then, most importantly in Roberts’s 1983 collection, *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*, which has remained the authoritative text of Wroth’s poetry for over three decades.⁵ This edition is profoundly indebted to Roberts’s pioneering scholarship and textual acumen. Like Waller, Roberts reproduced the 1621 selection and order of poems, because preserving the author’s “final intentions” was the standard goal of editions from the 1970s and 1980s—an editorial tradition that goes back to the nineteenth century and that is still the benchmark for most scholarly editions.

At the time Wroth wrote her songs and sonnets, spelling and punctuation had not yet been codified. Writers customarily deployed their own distinctive spelling and punctuation, which typesetters altered and to some extent regularized for print. Roberts imported spelling, punctuation, and some, but not all, of the variants from Wroth’s autograph manuscript on the grounds that they reflected Wroth’s own scribal habits; however, Wroth would not have expected or wanted her poems to appear in public clothed in such intimate garb.

Roberts’s edition is a hybrid, neither manuscript nor print, but an amalgamation of both. Roberts’s editorial choices made sense at the time, but they elided vital differences between manuscript and print.⁶ Despite her vast knowledge of

4. Waller, ed. *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*. (Salzburg: Inst. für Anglistik & Amerikanistik, University of Salzburg, 1977).

5. Roberts, *Poems*, quoted here and throughout from the 1992 paperback edition, which adds the corrections Wroth made on the Kohler copy of the 1621 *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* to the list of variants.

6. For information about printing practices, characteristic features of manuscript writing, and early modern writers’ and readers’ relation to manuscript and print, see Mark Bland, *A Guide to Early Printed Books and Manuscripts* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), and Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

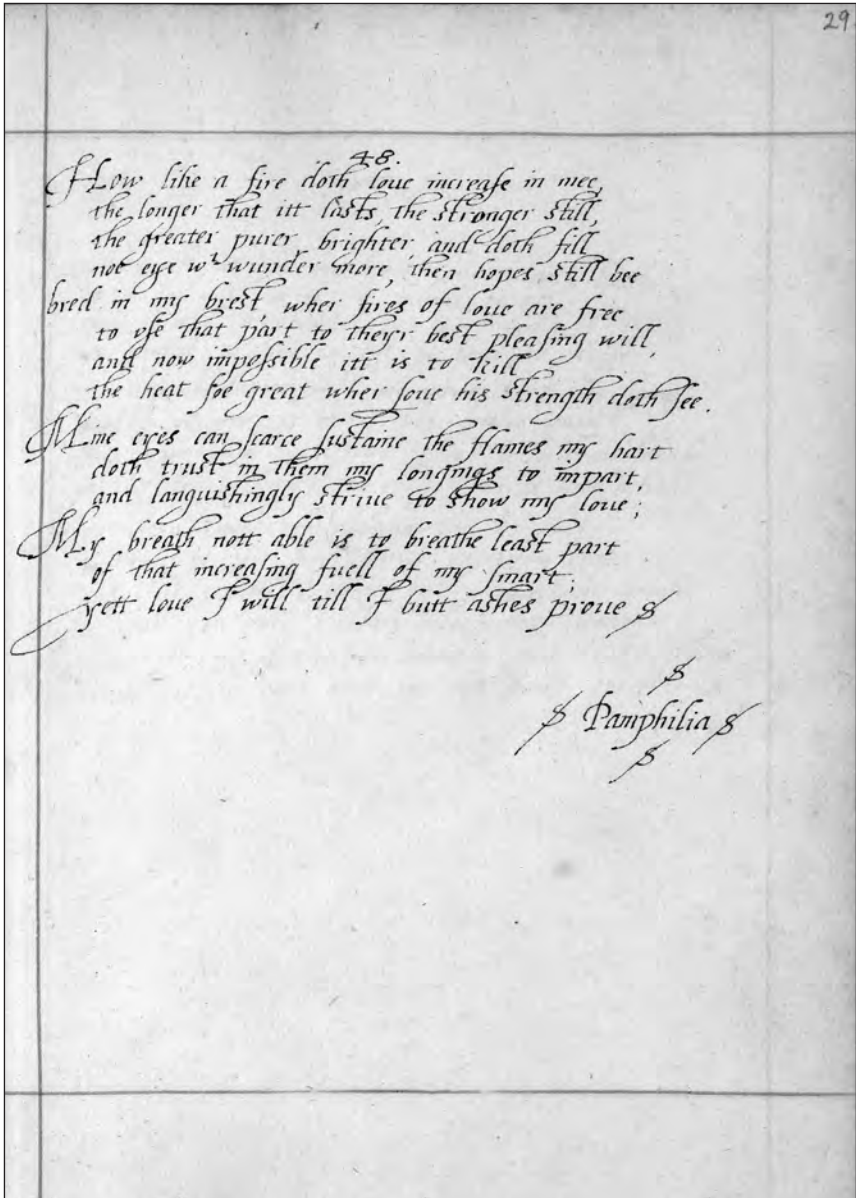


Figure 2. MS V.a.104, fol. 29r, showing the signature Pamphilia and four fermesses that mark the end of the first group of poems. Reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC.

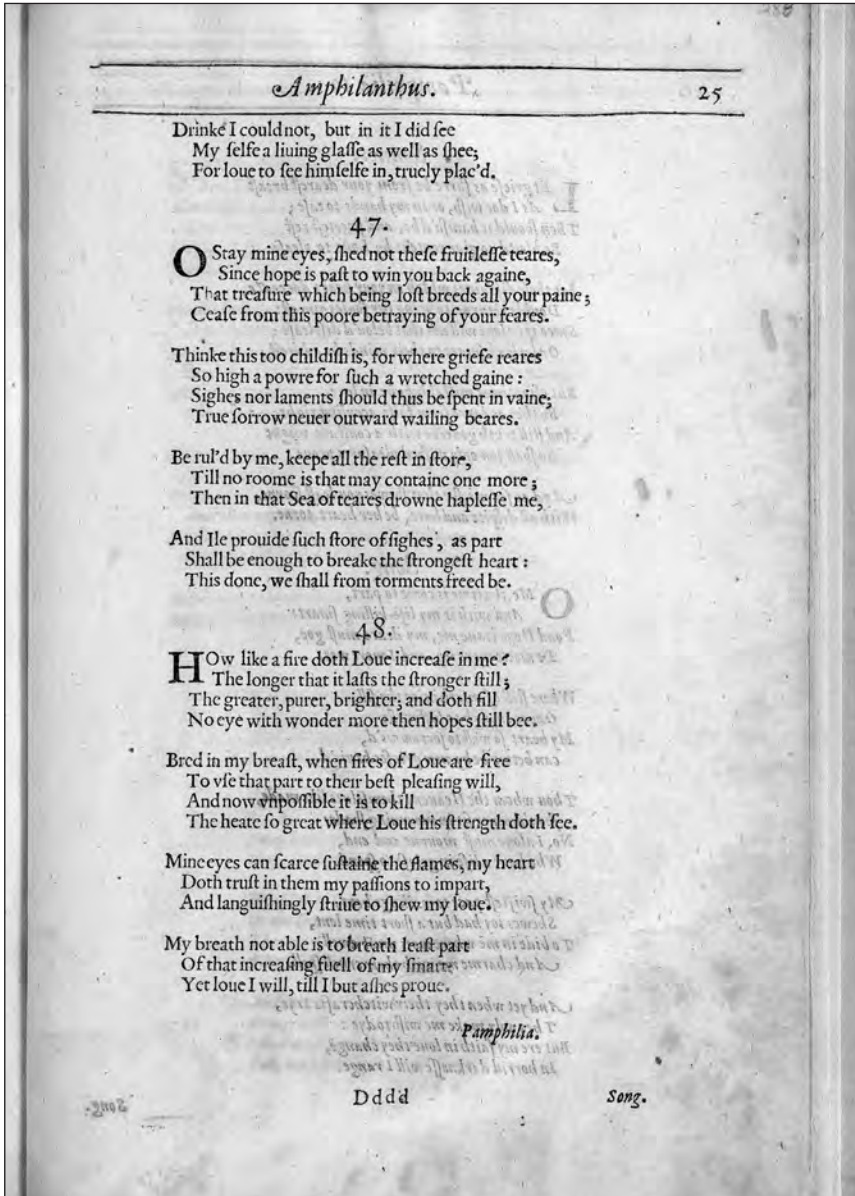


Figure 3. *The Countesse of Mountgomeries Urania* (1621), sig. 4D1r, showing the signature Pamphilia but no fermesses. Reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC.

Wroth's life and writing, Roberts failed to recognize the significant, substantive differences between the Folger manuscript and the 1621 printed text. Anyone interested in Wroth's complete corpus could have found the complete list of Folger poems in Roberts's introduction, as well as the nine poems Wroth transposed to *Urania* and the six unprinted poems that Roberts placed in separate sections at the back.⁷ Nonetheless, to reconstitute Wroth's manuscript sequence from Roberts's edition requires one to flip back and forth or to painstakingly cut and paste poems from three separate sections, and then write in Wroth's revisions from the list of variants. As far as I know, no one examined the excised poems or Wroth's original sequence and revisions closely enough to grasp their significance, which is understandable since Roberts claimed that Wroth's revisions did little more than alter accidentals of spelling and punctuation and change a few words to regularize the meter and correct the grammar.

The Folger Shakespeare Library digitized Manuscript V.a.104 in 2008; in 2012, *Mary Wroth's Poetry: An Electronic Edition*, edited by Paul Salzman, went online. Salzman's La Trobe University website includes a facsimile of each Folger poem along with a transcription of both the manuscript and printed poem.⁸ His original spelling transcriptions enable scholars to compare the manuscript and printed version of a given poem, while his modernized texts make the poems more easily legible.⁹

Roberts's printed edition and Salzman's electronic edition are both enormously valuable, each in their own right, but neither one conveys the profound, fundamental differences between the two versions of Wroth's poetry. Salzman's transcriptions do not reproduce all of Wroth's multistage revisions, which can be decoded only by studying Wroth's handwriting, magnifying digital images of the manuscript, and meticulously scrutinizing one correction after another. Moreover, Salzman's decision to reproduce the manuscript sequence but not the

7. In *Poems*, 64, Roberts lists the order of the Folger poems, using the consecutive numbers she added to the 1621 printed poems and the *Urania* poems. The excised poems appear on pages 143–45. The nine poems moved from the Folger Manuscript to *Urania* appear amid the fifty-four poems from the 1621 *Urania* on pages 146–95.

8. The Folger images are available at <http://luna.folger.edu/luna/servlet>. The magnification makes it possible to decode Wroth's otherwise indecipherable deletions and revisions. Paul Salzman, *Mary Wroth's Poetry: An Electronic Edition*, is available at <http://wroth.latrobe.edu.au/>. Salzman explores the advantages of online publication in "Me and My Shadow: Editing Wroth for the Digital Age," in *Re-Reading Mary Wroth*, ed. Katherine R. Larson and Naomi J. Miller, with Andrew Strycharski (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 183–92, as does Rebecca L. Fall in "Pamphilia Unbound: Digital Re-Visions of Mary Wroth's Folger Manuscript, V.a.104," *RRMW*, 193–207.

9. For a detailed account and thoughtful assessment of Salzman's edition, see Clare R. Kinney, "Mary Wroth's Poetry: An Electronic Edition, ed. Paul Salzman," *Spenser Review* 44.1.9 (2014), which is available at: <http://www.english.cam.ac.uk/spenseronline/review/volume-44/441/digital-projects/mary-wroths-poetry-an-electronic-edition-ed-paul-salzman/>.

15.

Love like a juggler comes to play his prize
 and all minds draw his wonders to admire,
 to see how cunningly hee wanting eyes,
 can yett delectate the best sight of desire:
 The wanton child, how hee can fame his fire
 so pretely, as none sees his disguise,
 how finely doe his tricks, while wee fooles hire
 the ~~image~~ and service of his tiramies,
 For in the end, such iugling doth hee make
 as hee our hearts, in stead of eyes doth take
 for men can only by theys' flights abuse
 the sight wth minible, and delightfull skill;
 butt if hee play, his game is our best will:
 yett childlike, wee can nott his shorts refuse; &

Sly =

Figure 4. MS V.a.104, fol. 9v, showing Wroth's revisions. Reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC.

printed sequence mirrors Roberts's decision to reproduce the printed sequence but not the manuscript. Neither edition enables readers to see how Wroth's reorganization altered the meaning.

The goal of this edition is twofold: 1) to provide both sequences in their entirety as Wroth prepared them to be read, first in her manuscript collection and then in print; and 2) to enable readers to see how Wroth transformed her private collection of poems into a work suitable for public consumption. To that end, the manuscript text provided here reproduces the corrections and revisions Wroth wrote onto her autograph manuscript, including numerous places not included in Roberts's or Salzman's variants where she overwrote individual letters to change a word. Wroth's important but confusing original numbers appear between bracketed sequential numbers for both sequences so that readers can find, read, compare, and cite poems in their two different contexts. Glosses for old spellings and outmoded meanings appear in the right-hand margin of the manuscript sequence; more elaborate annotations appear in footnotes. Readers of the printed text can use the sequential numbers to consult glosses and annotations in the manuscript text. To help readers analyze Wroth's revisions, substantive variants appear in footnotes below both sequences.

This edition also includes the private manuscript versions of William Herbert's "Elegy" and Mary Sidney (Wroth)'s "Penshurst Mount" (in appendix 1) because they comprise an urtext, a precipitating crisis that reverberates throughout Wroth's oeuvre.¹⁰ The dialogic poetics of secrecy described in "Elegy" and deployed in "Penshurst Mount" offers a validation and methodology for reading "Pamphilia to Amphilanthus" as one side of a covert lyric exchange between Mary Sidney/Wroth¹¹ and her first cousin William Herbert, third Earl of Pembroke.

Although we do not know when their love affair began, their intimacy is indisputable because family documents record the birth of their two children, Will and Catherine, in the 1620s. It is often assumed that Wroth wrote *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* after the death of her husband in 1614, which has also been

10. I am grateful to Garth Bond for permission to use the texts of "Elegy" and "Penshurst Mount" that he edited for "Amphilanthus to Pamphilia: William Herbert, Mary Wroth, and Penshurst Mount," *SJ* 31 (2013): 51–80. The texts of the poems appear in Appendix 1.

11. Deciding how to refer to early modern women can be difficult, since their names changed when they married. Throughout this edition, the form Sidney/Wroth designates Wroth's life or writing both before and after marriage. Mary Sidney (Wroth) refers to Wroth before her marriage and distinguishes her from her grandmother and aunt, whose maiden names were also Mary Sidney. Since maiden names were not used as middle names, Mary Sidney Wroth would be an anachronism; therefore, Mary (Sidney) Wroth, or simply Wroth, refers to her more generally. Except when it seems important, the present volume omits titles such as Lady and Sir and uses names instead; the exceptions are Mary (Sidney) Herbert, Countess of Pembroke, who is called "the countess" to distinguish her from her niece, Mary (Sidney) Wroth, and her son, William Herbert, who is called Herbert even after he became the third Earl of Pembroke.



Figure 5. Line engraving of William Herbert, Third Earl of Pembroke, by Lucas Vorsterman, early 17th century. National Portrait Gallery, London.

used as a *terminus a quo* for her love affair with Herbert. As a result, Wroth's poetry has been seen as belated—as conventional Petrarchan poetry repurposed to express a female point of view over a decade after the sonnet craze initiated by *Astrophil and Stella* (1591) had run its course.¹² Yet as we shall see, the specter

12. As Waller explains in *The Sidney Family Romance: Mary Wroth, William Herbert, and the Early Modern Construction of Gender* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993), 191, "The date is important: even in the time it was written, it was a culturally marginal work. 1621 is some thirty years after the main vogue of sonneteering in England... Not only are her poems among the last recog-

of an impending marriage that haunts “Penshurst Mount” and the beginning of “Pamphilia to Amphilanthus” suggests that Wroth began to write her private love poetry shortly before her arranged marriage to Robert Wroth in September 1604, five years before English Renaissance sonneteering reached its zenith with the publication of Shakespeare’s sonnets in 1609.

By entitling her poems “Pamphilia to Amphilanthus” (as compared to Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella*), Wroth announces that Pamphilia’s poems are addressed to Amphilanthus and hints that her own poems were primarily written to and for her long-term lover, Amphilanthus’s real-life counterpart, William Herbert. Josephine Roberts long ago noticed that the last poem in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* puns on “will,” connecting Amphilanthus to Wroth’s beloved cousin Will. Recently, Mary Ellen Lamb has shown that Herbert’s poems also pun on worth/Wroth. Wroth herself uses both puns in “Pamphilia to Amphilanthus” and *Urania* to signal that she and Herbert were writing and responding to each other in encoded poetry.¹³

Wroth’s intricately interconnected poems, published romance, play, and romance continuation, probably written in that order beginning in 1604 and ending in the 1620s, elucidate the ways in which her writing interweaves art and life. Wroth’s romance occupies the fabulous, hazy borderlands where real people and events metamorphose into richly multivalent, creative fiction. Pamphilia, the poet/lover of Amphilanthus and Wroth’s avatar or alter ego, is both the protagonist of her romance and the speaker of her sonnet sequence, although the connection is less evident to readers today because Josephine Roberts’s modern edition of *Urania* part I omits *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, which appeared at the end of the 1621 romance. *The Second Part of the Countess of Montgomery’s Urania*, also known as the manuscript continuation because it remained unpublished until 1999, reveals more intimate aspects of Pamphilia’s relationship with Amphilanthus, including a private marriage contract and a child born out of wedlock. Wroth’s play *Love’s Victory*, which was not published until the twentieth century, dramatizes the varieties of love experienced or written about by two generations

nizably Petrarchan poetry in English, but they are doubly ‘belated,’ to use Harold Bloom’s term, in relation to her own family.”

13. Roberts, “The Biographical Problem of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*,” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 1 (1982): 49; Lamb, “‘Can you suspect a change in me?’: Poems by Mary Wroth and William Herbert, Third Earl of Pembroke,” *RRMW*, 55–56. Gary Waller, *The Sidney Family Romance*, noticed, 199–201, that Wroth uses both puns. Hence, “if these poems were circulated among Wroth’s family and close friends, the autobiographical level would surely have been recognized.” Although his book juxtaposed Herbert’s and Wroth’s lives and writing, Waller’s mistaken belief that “none of Wroth’s poems seem to be ‘answer poems’ like those Pembroke wrote with Rudyerd” calls into question his conclusion that “the connections between the two cousins’ poems are generic rather than specific” (194).

of Sidneys, most notably Mary Wroth herself and her lover, William Herbert, who probably acted the leading roles when the play was staged for family and friends.¹⁴

When Wroth wrote *Urania* and “Pamphilia to Amphilanthus,” modern distinctions between fiction and nonfiction did not exist.¹⁵ Autobiography as we understand it was not yet a recognized genre, though autobiographical elements peek out—from prefatory letters in printed works; prose narratives; pastoral personae that had encoded the writer’s thoughts and feelings since antiquity; and, most importantly for our purposes, love poetry where the porous boundary between poet and personae, life and art, was negotiated by name puns, allegory, and ellipses.¹⁶ Like *Urania*, “Pamphilia to Amphilanthus” is quasi-autobiographical, though not in quite the same way, since lyrics do not set out to narrate or recount a story. Rather, English sonnets in general and Wroth’s in particular are artfully dramatized moments in time, written or performed as events unfold.¹⁷

Like the most renowned English Renaissance sonnet sequences, Wroth’s “Pamphilia to Amphilanthus” began as a series of private poems, written for herself, her lover, and her close family and friends, whose responses are woven into the fabric of the poetry. The contingent nature of Wroth’s private lyric dialogue would have been equally true for her most celebrated predecessors and contemporaries. “Astrophil and Stella,” written by Wroth’s uncle Sir Philip Sidney in 1580, circulated privately in manuscript and was published only posthumously, in an authorized edition edited by Philip’s sister Mary, after it appeared in a 1591 pirated edition. Sidney invited his private lyric audience to connect Astrophil with himself and Stella with Penelope Rich by alluding to the pheon or arrowhead that graced the Sidney family coat of arms and by punning on rich/Rich. Edmund Spenser’s sonnet sequence, “Amoretti,” was originally written to and for Elizabeth Boyle. After she accepted his marriage proposal, Spenser wrote a sonnet addressed to three Elizabeths: his fiancée, his mother, and his queen. “Amoretti” was printed along with his “Epithalamion,” or marriage song, in 1595, a year after his marriage. The carefully guarded manuscripts of John Donne’s “Songs and Sonnets,” which were probably written around the turn of the century, began to circulate more freely in the 1610s but remained unpublished until 1633, two years after his death. Donne’s puns on “more” allude to his clandestine courtship of

14. See Findlay, “Lady Mary Wroth: *Love’s Victory*,” *ARC*, 2:216.

15. See Judith H. Anderson’s important study, *Biographical Truth: The Representation of Historical Persons in Tudor-Stuart Writing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

16. As Elizabeth Heale writes in *Autobiography and Authorship in Renaissance Verse: Chronicles of the Self* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 9, “the self-evident artfulness of verse, its foregrounded artifice . . . offered genres in which autobiographical and authorial selves could appear as safely figurative and rhetorical.”

17. See, for example, Jennifer Lee Carrell, “A Pack of Lies in a Looking Glass: Lady Mary Wroth’s *Urania* and the Magic Mirror of Romance,” *SEL* 34 (1994): 80.

Anne More, which culminated in their elopement in December 1601, Donne's imprisonment, and a court battle that legalized the marriage the following spring. Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, printed in 1609 in an authorized or unauthorized edition (scholars disagree), contains puns on "will" that are at once an expression of intention, a circumlocution for sexual desire, an allusion to Will Shakespeare's own first name, and probably also an allusion to the name of the young man (Will Herbert?) to whom many of the sonnets were originally addressed.¹⁸

Autograph texts of English Renaissance sonnet sequences are extremely rare. There are none for Donne's "Songs and Sonnets," or Sidney's, Spenser's, or Shakespeare's sonnet sequences. There is a surviving holograph manuscript of poems by Wroth's father, Robert Sidney, but his poems were not published until the twentieth century.¹⁹ Unlike her father's manuscript poems, or Sidney's, Spenser's, and Shakespeare's printed poems, Wroth's lyrics exist both in her own handwriting and in books printed during her lifetime, including one rare copy of the 1621 printed text with Wroth's own handwritten corrections.²⁰ The remarkable survival of Wroth's poetry in *both* an autograph manuscript with distinct, separately numbered groups of poems written at different times, containing incisive multistage revisions designed to conceal the most intimate aspects of her private poetry, *and* a revised, reorganized, renumbered, corrected printed text makes "Pamphilia to Amphilanthus" an incomparable case study for this vital, transitional moment when most lyric poems were still originally written for a private lyric audience but when the advent of affordable, widely circulated printed books encouraged writers to think about how their work would be understood by an unknown reading public with continually changing attitudes and social mores.

When Roberts published *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth* in 1983, manuscript poetry had not yet become a major field of scholarship.²¹ Renaissance lit-

18. The connection, first made by Jonathan Gibson in "Cherchez la femme: Mary Wroth and Shakespeare's *Sonnets*," *Times Literary Supplement* (August 13, 2004): 12–13, is developed by Penny McCarthy, "Autumn 1604: Documentation and Literary Coincidence," in *Mary Wroth and Shakespeare*, ed. Paul Salzman and Marion Wynne-Davies (London: Routledge, 2015), 37–46.

19. *The Poems of Robert Sidney*, ed. P. J. Croft (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

20. This "unique copy" was owned by Charlotte Kohler, who identified the corrections as Wroth's handwriting. It was reproduced, with Kohler's permission, in *Mary Wroth*, selected and introduced by Josephine A. Roberts, in *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works, Part 1, Printed Writings, 1500–1640*, vol. 10, ed. Betty Travitsky and Patrick Cullen (Aldershot, UK: Scolar Press; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 1996). Kohler gave the book to Josephine Roberts, and after her death, Roberts's husband, James Gaines, presented it to the University of Pennsylvania where it is today.

21. For some illuminating studies that explore the importance of manuscript circulation, see Arthur F. Marotti, *John Donne, Coterie Poet* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986) and *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Steven W. May, *The Elizabethan Courtier Poets: The Poems and their Contexts* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press,

erary criticism focused on the self-analysis, self-exploration, and self-fashioning of the male poet and speaker, which reduced the sonnet lady to a shadowy reflection of male desire.²² While praising Wroth for creating a female speaker and inverting traditional gender roles, Roberts incorporated the dominant critical methodology of the time by emphasizing the speaker, disembodiment of the beloved, and discounting their interactive dialogue. Roberts noticed that the last poem in the 1621 sequence contains a possible pun on Will/will, but she did not explore the implications of Wroth's hints that the poems were written to and for Will Herbert. Roberts's extensive biographical research yielded a detailed introduction to Wroth's life and work in *The Poems of Mary Wroth* as well as an essay entitled "The Biographical Problem of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*." Nonetheless, Roberts believed that *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* "adhere[d] so closely to the well-defined Petrarchan mode" that, she declared, "the rhetoric of wooing, or courtship is largely absent."²³ Thus, even as Roberts was discovering invaluable information about Wroth's life—information that she and subsequent scholars deployed to explore the sophisticated layering of life and art in *Urania* and *Love's Victory*—she deterred critics from analyzing Pamphilia's lyric dialogue with Amphilanthus, or its analogue, Mary Wroth's private lyric dialogue with William Herbert.

Roberts's influential account of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* became the basis for subsequent interpretations, which emphasized Pamphilia's isolation, long-suffering constancy, and spiritual transcendence. Elaine V. Beilin reiterated and further instantiated Roberts's claims that Wroth's sonnets barely mention Amphilanthus, that the language of courtship is absent, and that "the reality at the core of Pamphilia's language is divine love."²⁴ *Reading Mary Wroth*, the important first essay collection devoted entirely to Wroth, included a seminal essay by Jeff Masten which argued that Wroth's poems "make little attempt to engage outside interlocutors" but instead "speak an almost inscrutable private language." Masten further diminished Amphilanthus's importance when he contended that Wroth

1991); H. R. Woudhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts, 1558–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); Germaine Warkentin, "Robert Sidney's 'Darcke Offerings': The Making of a Late Tudor Manuscript Canzoniere," *SS XII* (1998): 37–74; Margaret J. M. Ezell, *Social Authorship and the Advent of Print* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); and Heidi Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender, and Literacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

22. For an account of the ways in which this dominant critical trend discounted the women in Renaissance love poetry, see Ilona Bell, "The Role of the Lady in Donne's *Songs and Sonets*," *SEL* 23 (1983): 113–29, and *Elizabethan Women and the Poetry of Courtship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

23. *Poems*, 59, 48.

24. Beilin, *Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 241.

rejected Petrarchism's public voice, withdrawing into "a relentlessly private ... interiorized space" and choosing not to circulate her poems.²⁵

The feminist desire to celebrate Wroth as the writer, subject, and primary audience of her own poetic creations made *Amphilanthus* expendable. As Mary B. Moore wrote, Wroth "depicts a female sense of self through the labyrinth—presenting a self that is isolated, enclosed, difficult, and complex" and rendering her beloved an even more spectral "gap" than is usual in Petrarchan poetry. Naomi J. Miller added that images of birth, miscarriage, and female friendship strengthen Wroth's female point of view, but Miller also reiterated Roberts's view that "Wroth makes the love experience itself, not the beloved—the locus of value and the stimulus to poetry." Wendy Wall thought that Petrarchism's absent, distant lover enabled Wroth to represent a private self. Natasha Distiller added a postmodern turn that broadened the gap between Wroth's female need not to be seen and Petrarchism's male desire for publicity and fame.²⁶ Ideology provided an explanation. As Ann Rosalind Jones wrote, Petrarchism offered "an ideologically safe mode for women (no proximity meant no threat to chastity)." Clare R. Kinney summarized what most critics saw as a "given[,] that the male body is not, officially, culturally imaginable as an object of female desire."²⁷

While some critics and editors disparaged Wroth's poems as overly conventional Petrarchan poetry, closer scrutiny yielded greater regard. Barbara Kiefer Lewalski reiterated many of Roberts's premises but gave Wroth more credit for her revolutionary and "transgressive" use of "conventional genres to explore women's rather than men's consciousness and fantasies." Unlike Waller, Lewalski noted that Wroth and Herbert exchanged poems, but she nonetheless believed that "Wroth's sequence displaces and silences the male beloved even more completely than is usually the case with the Petrarchan lady." Heather Dubrow extended Lewalski's praise of Wroth's poetic achievement by arguing that *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, though festooned with conventional Petrarchan language, is not subservient to Petrarch or Petrarchism but is closer to Shakespeare's brilliantly creative sonnets.

25. Masten, "Shall I turne blabb?": Circulation, Gender, and Subjectivity in Mary Wroth's Sonnets," *RMW*, 67, 69.

26. Moore, "The Labyrinth as Style in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*," *SEL* 38 (1998): 62, 66; Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 330–38; Miller, "Rewriting Lyric Fictions: The Role of the Lady in Lady Mary Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*," in *Renaissance Englishwoman in Print: Counterbalancing the Canon*, ed. Anne M. Haselkorn and Betty S. Travitsky (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), 303; Distiller, *Desire and Gender in the Sonnet Tradition* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

27. Jones, *The Currency of Eros: Women's Love Lyric in Europe, 1540–1620* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Kinney, "Mary Wroth's Guilty 'Secrett Art': The Poetics of Jealousy in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*," in *Write or Be Written: Early Modern Women Poets and Cultural Constraints*, ed. Barbara Smith and Ursula Appelt (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2001), 69.

Yet Dubrow also concluded, echoing earlier views by Roberts, Beilin, Lewalski, and many others, that *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* focuses “on the mind of the lover rather than the relationships between lovers” because “Wroth is writing about spiritual love and the heightened spiritual peace it brings.”²⁸

Masten’s essay proved almost as influential as Roberts’s introduction, but his claim that Wroth removed her poetry from circulation was widely contested. Daniel Juan Gil maintained that *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* actively engages a public readership, while Nona Fienberg thought Wroth was writing for an audience of Renaissance women. Michael G. Brennan, Margaret Hannay, and Paul Salzman provided concrete evidence that Wroth’s poems did circulate, winning dedications, accolades, and fame that made Wroth known as a writer as early as 1612.²⁹ Meanwhile, as the focus of feminist theory evolved from the silencing and victimization of women to a growing focus on female subjectivity and agency, the premise that the personal is political, and that writing, gender, and the political unconscious are intricately intertwined, led a number of scholars to argue that, far from withdrawing into solitude and isolation, Wroth’s poems comment on and critique contemporary political debates. Where Masten saw a rejection of male public discourse, later critics interpreted Wroth’s rewriting of Petrarchan convention as a boldly political act. Most notably, Rosalind Smith applied the political readings of *Urania to Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*: “Wroth is positioning her sequence both in a wide political and religious frame, and a Protestant literary tradition integrating both Sidneian and radical Spenserian agendas.”³⁰

More recently, a few critics have cautiously begun to discern a latent eroticism in Wroth’s poetry. Focusing on “a crowne of sonnets,” Mary Moore noted Wroth’s “transgressive expression of erotic desire,” even though, like Beilin, Dubrow, and numerous others, Moore thought Wroth’s “fictional privacy” transformed her erotic yearning into spiritual love, making “the object of desire ...

28. Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 244, 256, 253; Dubrow, *Echoes of Desire: English Petrarchism and Its Counterdiscourses* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 133. The emphasis on divine love remains central in Angela Bullard, “Love Melancholy and Creative Inspiration in Mary Wroth’s *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*,” *SJ* 33 (2015): 81–102.

29. Gil, “The Currency of the Beloved and the Authority of Lady Mary Wroth,” *Modern Language Studies* 29 (1999): 73–92; Fienberg, “Mary Wroth and the Invention of Female Poetic Subjectivity,” *RMW*, 175–90; Brennan, “Creating Female Authorship in the Early Seventeenth Century: Ben Jonson and Lady Mary Wroth,” in *Women’s Writing and the Circulation of Ideas: Manuscript Publication in England, 1550–1800*, ed. George L. Justice and Nathan Tinker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 73–93; Hannay, *MSLW*, 232; Salzman, *Reading Early Modern Women’s Writing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 60–89.

30. Rosalind Smith, “Lady Mary Wroth’s *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*: The Politics of Withdrawal,” *ELR* 30 (2000): 408–31.

the ideal of love itself, rather than a human beloved.” Susan Lauffer O’Hara went further, contending that Wroth’s poetry enacts “the throes of orgasmic ecstasy,” balanced by a “somasochistic obsession” and “loss of control.” Paul Hecht described the “physical bliss of love consummated,” leading to “rage at her seduction, and the destructive ignition of her sexual passion.” For James M. Bromley, gender theory offered a fresh approach to Wroth’s portrayal of sexuality: Wroth’s failure to make her private erotic fantasies public entailed “an effacement of heteroerotic desire” that enables today’s readers to question the very notion of heteronormativity. Finally, in “Re-Imagining Mary Wroth through Fiction,” Naomi Miller explained that recent criticism “deeply influenced [her] representation of Wroth, both as a passionately sensual woman who concealed her passion in her poetry, and as a committed and successful musician.”³¹

As this overview attests, there is an impressive body of literary criticism devoted to the 1621 printed version of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* that praises Wroth’s female speaker even as it effaces the male beloved. What we need now is a thorough reevaluation of Wroth’s oeuvre that examines her private manuscript poetry and explores the ways in which it alters and expands our understanding of her printed poetry and her other writing. When the 1621 printed sequence is read alongside Wroth’s autograph manuscript, as this edition encourages readers to do, Wroth’s poetry looks more innovative, more erotic, and more shrewdly multivalent—qualities that are further reinforced by reading Wroth’s poems with her play, *Love’s Victory*, and her romance, *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania*, parts 1 and 2.

The outpouring of love poetry in the last two decades of the sixteenth century and the first decade of the seventeenth produced some of the greatest collections of poetry in the English language. The layering of private and public voices in which art shapes life even as life shapes art yielded some of the most highly wrought, tensile, and multifaceted lyrics in the history of English literature, and Wroth’s sonnets and songs occupy a notable position among them. “Pamphilia to Amphilanthus” pushes against the bounds of propriety, pressuring, stretching, challenging literary and social conventions more boldly than printed poems by Wroth or other early modern women writers of her generation were yet able to do, which is why it is imperative that our assumptions about early modern women and their writing incorporate not only the public voices of their printed books but also the veiled intimations of their private manuscripts.

31. Moore, “The Labyrinth,” 190; O’Hara, *The Theatricality of Mary Wroth’s Pamphilia to Amphilanthus: Unmasking Conventions in Context* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2011), 56, 59; Hecht, “Distortion, Aggression, and Sex in Mary Wroth’s Sonnets,” *SEL* 53 (2013): 103, 106; James M. Bromley, *Intimacy and Sexuality in the Age of Shakespeare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 159; Miller, “Re-Imagining Mary Wroth through Fiction,” *SJ* 32 (2014): 40.

The remaining sections of this introduction situate “Pamphilia to Amphihlanthus” in the context of her family’s contributions to Elizabethan and Jacobean culture and governance, her life, her relationship to William Herbert, and her other writing. Of course, we must not allow history or biography to delimit Wroth’s poems. Nonetheless, the forces that interanimate Wroth’s life and writing show that her poetry was shaped both by her personal experiences and by the historical, political, and literary moment in which she lived, when most poetry was still written for private circulation even though it might end up in print. Wroth was a master of concealment, and her old antagonist, Time, has erased a lot of what her original private lyric audience would have known without being told. Still, the intimate, unfolding lyric dialogue that is simultaneously enacted and veiled by her manuscript poems, and even more adroitly occluded by her printed poetry, shows just how intrepid and pioneering she was, in art as in life.

Family, Politics, and Literary Tradition

The title page of Wroth’s romance proudly displays her illustrious family heritage: “The Countesse of Mountgomerie Urania. Written by the right honorable the Lady Mary Wroath. Daughter to the right noble Robert Earle of Leicester. And neece to the ever famous, and renowned Sr Phillips Sidney knight. And to ye most exceleⁿt Lady Mary Countesse of Pembroke late deceased.”

Wroth’s impressive family credentials were a smart marketing strategy, but they were much more than that. The Sidney and Herbert literary mantle authorized the publication of Wroth’s poetry and prose even as it gave her the means and wherewithal to become a writer.

Thanks to her privileged background, Mary Sidney (Wroth) had access to a superior private education, a library full of great literature, and a network of influential writers and powerful statesmen.³² The family’s literary, social, and political preeminence gave her great expectations, exquisite literary taste, and powerful male and female mentors and advocates, which enabled her to surmount social mores that sought to subordinate and constrain early modern women.

Mary’s uncle, Sir Philip Sidney, died in October 1586 from a wound incurred at the Battle of Zutphen—a year and a day before Mary Sidney (Wroth) was born. Following his death, Sidney was celebrated as a soldier, a courtier, and above all, a writer. His fame lived on: “Our Sidney and our perfect man,” William

32. The extent of early modern women’s literacy has been widely debated. David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), offered a low number. Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and Its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1982), and Nigel Wheale, *Writing and Society: Literacy, Print and Politics in Britain 1590–1660* (London: Routledge, 1999), argue for a higher number.



Figure 6. Title page from *The Countesse of Mountgomeries Urania* (1621). Engraving by Simon van de Passe. Reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC.