

ECOLOGICAL ESCAPISM AND WOMEN IN THE
POETRY AND PROSE OF AEMILIA LANYER
AND LADY MARY WROTH

by

ERIN ALLENE HILDEBRAND

MICHELLE M. DOWD, COMMITTEE CHAIR
DAVID AINSWORTH
BRAD TUGGLE

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of English
in the Graduate School of
The University of Alabama

TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA

2018

Copyright Erin Allene Hildebrand 2018
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of the ways in which Lady Mary Wroth and Aemilia Lanyer approach women and ecological spaces. These writers take almost opposite approaches to the types of nature explored and the actions that are possible within such freeing natural settings. This thesis argues that regardless of what type of space is being considered, early modern women writers perceived natural space as a gateway for female community, suffering, and longing. It carefully considers “The Description of Cookeham” from Aemilia Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, “Song 1” from *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* and *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania* by Lady Mary Wroth and the ways in which female characters interact outside of the confines of patriarchal society and the ecological forces that afford them escape.

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to women writers everywhere. Your voices are deserving of all the attention in the world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I'd like to thank Michelle Dowd, my committee chair, for her constant wisdom and support; her guidance has been invaluable these last two years. I am also indebted to David Ainsworth, whose class planted the first seed of this thesis, and Brad Tuggle, who saved the day for this small committee. I also want to extend a thank you to the entire Hudson Strode faculty, for their guidance and commentary on my work up to this point. This project is a fitting culmination for my work in this program and my time spent with all of you has been enormously helpful in my development as a scholar. I'd also like to extend a special thank you to Will Ramsay, Courtney Parker, and Elizabeth Theriot for feeding me, placating me, and always texting back. Without your support, this project might have swallowed me whole. Finally, thank you to my parents for recognizing my passion, supporting my endeavors, and letting me talk endlessly about things you've never studied—you'll probably never read this, and that is totally fine.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACTii

DEDICATIONiii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTSiv

INTRODUCTION1

PART ONE: “TYING MY HEART TO HER BY THOSE RICHE CHAINES:”
GOD, FEMALE EROTICISM, AND THE NEW EDEN IN
AEMILIA LANYER’S “THE DESCRIPTION OF COOKE-HAM”12

PART TWO: “THE BARCK MY BOOKE SHALL BEE:”
EMBRACING WILDWOOD AND RITUALIZED SUFFERING
IN THE WRITINGS OF LADY MARY WROTH24

CONCLUSION38

REFERENCES39

INTRODUCTION

The criticism surrounding early modern female poets shows a divide between Aemilia Lanyer scholars and Mary Wroth scholars; Lanyer is often grouped in with the more traditional, devout women poets¹ and Wroth is viewed more like an outlier (less religious, more focused on love and Petrarchanism – similar to her male contemporaries). Much emphasis has been placed on Wroth's writings simply because she does not conform to the traditionally devout poetics of her female contemporaries and her fiction embodies more desirous, romantic themes. But critics still group these women together because of their sex; this is not altogether uncalled for, but it is definitely not the key reason to put these poets in conversation with one another. They both are interested in women and their relationship with nature; why are women aligned with nature? Why do they retreat to nature in literary, biblical, and popular culture? They both have such radically different answers to these questions and solutions for the problems that arise from male domination over nature. Lanyer believes that female community is best expressed in the garden of the country-house; she reimagines and refigures traditional patriarchal structures, like the country-house, and forms a new Eden where women can be intimate, educated, and devout. Wroth sees an inherent problem in the confines of social structures, so her heroines abandon their courtly life to vent their intense emotions; her writing is less about female community and more about women being in touch with themselves and using ecological forces to create venues for such private matters.

¹ Mary Sidney Hebert, for example, to whom part of the *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* is dedicated.

In “The Description of Cooke-ham,” the final poem in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, Lanyer appropriates traditionally male spaces and inverts them for female inclusivity. Her nuanced approach embraces the cultural signifiers of class and gentry while highlighting the necessity for predominantly female spaces within a patriarchal culture. These inversions are effective because the space is so familiar; the country-house and surrounding elaborate garden are pinnacles of wealth, status, and authority. Inverting these spaces radically changes the expectations of the people within them. Instead of running into the forest or moor, courtly women of Lanyer’s poetry rebuild the spaces that they already inhabit; by rebuilding, they can reconstruct the narrative of their status within the patriarchal culture that shaped the garden. Critics of country-house poetry “agree that the genre uses vast country seats as vehicles to praise or analyze the power of the feudal structure of family property inherited through primogeniture” (Coiro 357). By inverting these structures, Lanyer makes an exchange of power from the male-controlled house of Cooke-ham to the Clifford’s as they exist in the garden.

This particular poem has garnered a decent amount of critical attention. A large amount of existing conversation is dedicated to the autobiographical aspects of the poem and the unique circumstances which allowed Lanyer to write the certain subjects that she did (Lewalski, Woods). However, a more concise reading of Lanyer’s reclamation of male-dominated space both acknowledges the vitality of a semi-biographical understanding of the poem and the teleological moves within “Cooke-ham” that embrace female intimacy and religious devotion. Critics such as Michael Morgan Holmes affirm this choice of criticism:

By taking seriously the enthusiasm and longing that Lanyer conveys in her depictions of female community in a mythic garden of beautiful women, we are better positioned to

comprehend the ways in which her panegyrics to Christ and Cooke-ham also embody homoerotic desire as a key to spiritual and social happiness. (Holmes 176)

Sexuality and same-sex relations are prevalent in “Cooke-ham,” which is the final piece in Lanyer’s ode to all virtuous and beautiful women—the Edenic scene where these women can live outside of the control of male dominion and patriarchal authority and thrive. Throughout the entire *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, inclusivity and affection between women brings them all closer to a feminized Christ and “Cooke-ham,” the final piece, depicts the benefits of that closeness to both Jesus Christ and other women. Jennifer Munroe surmises the importance of “Cooke-ham” as the final piece in the sequence: “Aemilia Lanyer’s poetry draws on the idea that women might make gardens of their own and represents the garden as an ideal space for women to recoup the actual material losses they experience when disenfranchised from property and land ownership” (Munroe 75). Munroe’s statement is tied closely to the biographical understanding of Cooke-ham’s significance as a choice of location. Intentionality aside, Lanyer’s garden resembles Eden in its complete intangibility—although Cooke-ham was a real place where the Clifford’s and Lanyer resided, the paradise it offered was ephemeral and idealized. While the works of Barbara Lewalski, Susanne Woods, and Anne Baynes Coiro are valuable, the rigorous emphasis on her real-life circumstances has the tendency to pull away from more expansive critical readings of her poetry. Holmes goes on to compare Lanyer to Donne and Marvel and express why her work has the critical ability to transcend the canon established by such writers, “Lanyer goes beyond both poets...in detailing the intersections between survival and homoerotic desire...Lanyer presents homoerotic affection as a way for women to overcome the ravages of men’s proprietary claims and as a positive ground for real-world communities” (Holmes 167). The survival that Holmes acknowledges comes at the end of the poem with the

destruction of Cooke-ham and the particular choices the poet makes to preserve her affection. I do not intend to make an argument about Lanyer's sexual orientation or other preferences that simply cannot be proven; however, I agree with Holmes that the homoerotic and female elements of the poem should be taken seriously as devices and points of view, particularly her use of garden and natural imagery as conduits for intimate female relationships.

"Cooke-ham" is an exemplary poem for the intersections of womanly affection and gardens because of the qualities that make it different from the country-house genre established by Ben Jonson (even though Lanyer's piece preceded it by 4 years); Lanyer's description never ventures inside the country-house at Cooke-ham and she does not laud Margaret Clifford for her worldly possessions. Alastair Fowler sheds light on this distinction when he notes that "To Penshurst" "deals not with property but with power" (Fowler 9). Jonson sees the material wealth as physical manifestations of the great lord's power over the land and people on it, and he envies this. In contrast, Lanyer deals neither with Clifford's property nor power over the estate; instead she focuses on the escapism offered by natural forces. Her emphasis on the garden as an all-female Eden both highlights the ecological acceptance of homoerotic relationships and shows the devastating loss of homosocial bonds. By fully committing to the Eden metaphor, the patron's rejection of the poet's love and adherence to societal duties (her daughter's betrothal) act a sort of "fall," leading to the destruction of paradise and a forced exile. The trees become unable to flower and bear fruit, mirroring the inability of female-female relationships to produce offspring. The poet transcribes the poem as remembrance of her love and time in the garden and exits paradise alone. The impending marriage of the mistress's daughter and the subsequent male intrusion to the garden shows that this Eden can prosper with all-female relationships but also cannot function for a prolonged time with only all-female relationships. The poem becomes a

powerful piece about female love and ecological escapism when strictly historical readings are excluded.

Rather than describe the physical house, as popularized by “To Penshurst,” Lanyer carefully explores the garden surrounding the country-house and centers the action around the mistress figure. Susanne Woods suggests that the most important muse in the poem is the “great Lady” because “The poem’s principle conceit is that the house and grounds of Cookham reflect her presence (or absence)” (Woods 118). This centering of subject makes Lanyer’s poem different from other country-house poems and highlights the importance of the mistress as the most significant figure of the place described. This choice is specific because neither Margaret Clifford nor her daughter had any legal claim to Cooke-ham whilst they lived there with Lanyer (Lewalski 99). Metaphorically, the garden represents nature apart from the social, patriarchal hierarchy that the country-house represents; it is a sanctuary for early modern women that live in a system that devalues their gender: “Lanyer’s Cooke-ham garden is a recreation of the Edenic garden, an as-yet unblemished manifestation of God’s prelapsarian perfection on earth that predates the social injunctions against women’s land ownership and their subjection to men” (Munroe 76). She dedicates her poem to the garden because the natural world is inherently female: beautiful, reproductive, and wild unless carefully cultivated by the hands of man. Lanyer transforms Cooke-ham into a lush Eden with wild trees, brambles, and overgrown vines and skillfully navigates the forceful presence of male domination in country-house gardens. Without the company of men, the three women are able to live independently and express the sort of tender sensuality that is found throughout the poem, e.g. the garden is overflowing with fruits and flowers, there are moments of crying into each other’s chests, hand-holding, kissing, and child rearing. However, Alison Findlay points out that early modern gardens were not a true

representation of the natural world, but rather the physical manifestation of male cultivation over nature, “. . . a place where paternal law constrains natural instincts especially for female subjects. The nurturing and fashioning of natural growth is a botanical equivalent of the social tutelage that restrains human desire” (Findlay 71). In spite of building a poetic Eden, Lanyer cannot fully escape early modern society’s preconceived notions of the cultivated garden; she excludes men (with the exception of feminized biblical figures) in an attempt to preserve the “savage female wild” (Findlay 70) of nature, but the unavoidable male intrusion of the daughter’s marriage, as well as the precedential hetero-Eden makes her task insurmountable and ultimately unsuccessful. Ergo, the desertion of Cooke-ham is metaphorical because it is established with the foreknowledge of its destruction.

It is inherently problematic to read Lanyer’s work as decidedly homoerotic. The model of eroticized female friendship was not fully established until the mid-17th century by Katherine Philips; however, there is an argument to be made for Lanyer’s work anticipating Philips: “...women not willing to flout social mores developed an erotically charged yet shadowed language of female same-sex friendship...[these] women sought the rewards of ‘respectable’ social status...at the same time that they gestured against the conventional confinement” (Andreadis 103). In this way, Lanyer can circumvent the problem of overtly writing about eco-centric female intimacies while simultaneously producing an erotically charged garden of escapism. As described by Karla Jay, “lesbian eroticism must often be read in the silent spaces in an otherwise heterosexual text. Often, it is the ellipses or breaks in the text that mark the feelings between women that cannot be spoken” (Jay 4). Lanyer utilizes enjambment in the poem to cast ambiguity around the erotic language and situations presented. Lastly, there is an early modern understanding of same-sex friendships that is not always extended to women. Cicero, Aristotle,

and Michel de Montaigne all adamantly argue that friendship is based on parity—in this way, men and women can never be true friends because they are not equals and women cannot achieve the same degree of intensity or emotional connection because they are both inferiors to other men (Garrison Preface, Holmes 174). Lanyer is acutely aware that she must challenge this cultural idea; she does so in the dedications in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* and in “Cooke-ham” by leveling these female connections with that of Christ. Christ is accessible to these women by virtue of their distinctly feminine characteristics, Lanyer says that these women have given her the ability of “writing of divinest things”—bringing her closer to God through their friendships. While this reading goes against strictly religious readings of Lanyer, I argue that reading the “breaks” and “shadowed language” (although at times not shadowed at all) of Cooke-ham produces an indisputably beautiful synthesis of intense female relationships founded in the natural world on the brink of male intrusion.

Lady Mary Wroth’s work intersects with Lanyer’s in subject and place. She also places courtly women in a nature setting, but her solution for how they should deal with patriarchal structures and said natural space is radically opposite. Her characters run out of the court, through the elaborate hallways, past the garden and into the wild forest. This seems like a counterintuitive choice, especially given her heroine’s knowledge of Greek mythology: “For although orchards and domestic groves had always been looked on favourably, the forest had initially been seen as wild and hostile” (Thomas 192). Wroth’s heroines embrace this hostility and uncertainty. They cast off the façade of nature, gardens in particular, in favor of brambles, trees, brooks, and grass; there is no respite in rebuilding the houses that contain them – in order to honor these intense emotions, they have to abandon those spaces. Keith Thomas notes early modern attitudes towards wildwood: “Only ‘wild creatures’ they thought, would ‘ordinarily love

the liberty of the woods”” (Thomas 194). Motivated by such strong emotions, Wroth’s women retreat to this freedom and embody their “wild” which becomes a key element in Wroth’s female Petrarchanism.

Wroth’s interaction with Petrarch is concurrent with her male contemporaries and those preceding her in the 16th century. Petrarch’s *Il Canzoniere* popularized the tradition of classifying women as natural, ecological things. Sir Philip Sidney², Sir Thomas Wyatt, Robert Herrick, and Andrew Marvell³ are just a few examples of 16th and 17th century poets who carried on this tradition in England. Wroth’s engagement with the trope is most likely due to her extensive education and poetical family ties. Unlike these men, however, Wroth chooses not to make her women into deer or suns; rather, she embeds female suffering in an ecological landscape and uses their reactions to that climate to formulate a personal brand of female Petrarchanism. Her wild heroines do not transform into natural things; rather, they run towards those natural things and make them their own: they carve on trees, fashion clothes out of branches, and crawl upon the earth in acts of radical melancholy. This brand appropriates Petrarchan paradoxes⁴ in its extreme action.

My contribution to the critical conversation surrounding Wroth is my analysis of Song 1 and my queries investigating specific thematic ties between *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* and *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania*. “Song 1” has garnered less critical attention because it is an interlude and serves a different purpose than the rest of the sonnets and songs. While I am not the first scholar to suggest reading the strong connection between *Pamphilia* and *Urania* as purposeful—with the recurrence of two titular characters it is hard to ignore such a connection—

² *Astrophil and Stella*, c. 1580

³ Marvell’s “The Garden” uses this trope ironically, detailing moments from Greek mythology where women, fleeing unwelcome male suitors, physically transform into trees and reeds.

⁴ “I hate myself and love somebody else.” Sonnet 134, line 11.

I see their interconnectivity as an opportunity to learn more about Wroth as a writer and her strategies for character and world building via poetry and prose rather than as something inherently fallacious. While I agree with Jeff Masten's summation of Wroth's work as a response to Petrarchanism (Masten 69), the ways in which she uses Petrarch's paradoxes cast light on the irony of such statements coming from a female lover and subvert the inherent misogyny in the *RVF*. Wroth sees Petrarch's silent Laura, Wyatt's deer, and all of the fleeting nymphs and gives them agency, voice, and purpose in her sprawling cast of female leads.

Barbara Lewalski's assertion that Wroth reinvented Petrarchan verse (Lewalski 307) is a bold argument, but perhaps too forceful for the purposes of this thesis. Rather, I agree with Daniel Juan Gil that Wroth's approach to Petrarchanism is ambiguous more than it is a radical refashioning (Gil 74). She is not purposely reinventing, but instead appropriating specific elements and modifying others to explore the gendered inversion of beloved and lover. Wroth uses Pamphilia as her mouthpiece and "[she] writes in Petrarchan discourse to write against it" (Masten 71) while displacing "public, male exhibition with a discourse seeking to register a private authenticity of feeling" (Masten 72).

This thesis will look specifically at Wroth's use of tree carving across her two works. Most arguments about the significance of carving and women in wildwood focus on *Urania* rather than the sonnet sequence. Viewing *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* as an appendix to *Urania*, these tropes are clear indications of the texts' relationship and Wroth's curation of female Petrarchanism. It is not completely fallacious to read said tropes as occurring in the same textual atmosphere because of the titular characters and the scenic similarity of a melancholy shepherdess. The repetition of carving into trees is a striking image that Wroth crosses over from prose to poetry by way of more poetry. Pamphilia, the assumed narrator/author of *Pamphilia to*

Amphilanthus, carves sonnets in *Urania*. Not only is she making a public statement about her love for Amphilanthus, she is permanently altering an ecological element so that it will outlive her and her love.

These actions and images starkly divide Wroth from her religious female contemporaries. Wendy Wall addresses Wroth as a secular writer:

Mary Wroth, writing an imaginative work of fiction rather than a polemical religious tract, ironically defaces the text that she speaks ‘in print’: by rehearsing a male paradigm with a vengeance, she alters and ‘defaces’ it, both through her broad revisions of poetic tradition and her specific erasure of the ‘face’ of corporeality. (Wall 336)

By dictating that her female lovers deface nature and go against societal propriety, Wroth herself goes against the rules of female authorship. Both of these scenarios engage with notions of public and private. Laetitia Coussemont-Boillot notes Wroth’s use of secret and concealed writing in the *Urania* as a commentary on “the social constraints which weighed on the female authors and restricted their scope of writing to religious texts” (Coussemont-Boillot). Not only is she subverting genre and expectation for female writers, but she is integrating those feelings and ideologies into her texts.

There is a distinction between where these female lovers can go – “The aristocratic subject moves between the two sites: there is the court, where one imposes on oneself a civilizing regimen of self-composition and self-control; and there is the wilderness landscape, where one seems to indulge one’s passions more freely with the sanction of nature” (Bowerbank 41). Wroth antagonizes this notion and adheres to the court/wildwood binary in a way that makes her authorship compelling. But when she is contrasted with Lanyer, the dichotomy seems more complex. Lanyer does not take the extra step to remove herself and the Cliffords from the

patriarchal structure because they are disenfranchised from estate ownership and they have nowhere to go, unlike Wroth's women who are royalty. Like women in Greek mythology, the forest is too dangerous. Lanyer rebuilds what is broken but maintains an element of self-control; yet this control is not absolute which can be conferred from her stolen kiss scene and nature's combined efforts to hold onto a virtuous woman like Margaret Clifford. By putting these vastly different writers together, we can gain a wider scope of early modern women and their embodied nature. Gardens and wildwood are not the same thing, both Wroth and Lanyer choose the outside world to achieve for their characters what society cannot: a breadth of freedom and place where their autonomy is superior to cultural expectation.

PART ONE

“TYING MY HEART TO HER BY THOSE RICH CHAINES:” GOD, FEMALE EROTICISM, AND THE NEW EDEN IN AEMILIA LANYER’S “THE DESCRIPTION OF COOKE-HAM”

In “The Description of Cooke-ham” Lanyer utilizes garden imagery to create a safe space for inter-female intimacies. Lanyer is inverting typically patriarchal spaces, the country house and country house garden especially, which traditionally act as symbols of male domination and man’s control over nature. Lanyer reclaims these cultural signifiers of masculinity and wealth and inverts them to allow for a woman-centric Eden absent of men, except for Jesus Christ. Through her use of the garden, Lanyer can mirror the patriarchal structure of the country house and its surrounding garden; through this recognizable structure, she rebuilds her own Eden that is safe and prosperous for women rather than the societal one meant to subjugate them. Rather than reach for natural, wild spaces, Lanyer’s work engages patriarchal landscape as cultural reclamation, both in terms of female agency and women’s intimacy while simultaneously inverting the tropes of intensely intimate male renaissance friendships and man’s supposedly superior connection with God. She does all this through her country house poem, her subject of Margaret Clifford, and adaptation of biblical themes like the Garden of Eden and Christ’s suffering in the garden of Gethsemane. By appropriating these cultural touchstones, Lanyer can explore the effects of all-female spaces and homoeroticism within nature. This chapter is divided into three sections: The Garden, The Fall, and Our Time in the Garden Has Tethered Me to You. The Garden looks at Lanyer’s construction of the Garden of Eden and how she navigates the all-female paradise. The Fall considers the pitfalls of such constructions and the ways in which

Lanyer portrays the end of paradise and exile from Eden. *Our Time in the Garden* looks specifically at homoeroticism, female bonds, and Lanyer's particular brand of prelapsarianism.

The Garden

Lanyer reconstructs Cooke-ham's country-house garden in the image of the Garden of Eden. By doing this she is reclaiming the biblical narrative of female exclusivity and male dominion over the country-house. Through the new femme-Eden, Lanyer is able to address cultural perceptions of women's roles in the Church; instead of silent bystanders to their faith, these women walk and talk with Christ. By remaking the country-house garden, Lanyer appropriates the male governed space and places women solely in charge, highlighting the irony of the Clifford's stay at Cooke-ham as well as inventing a new space for uniquely feminine relationships and prosperities. Her use of biblical imagery, ambiguous eroticism, and reproduction develop a safe haven for female intimacies.

The poet begins by calling Cooke-ham the place "where I first obtained/ Grace from that Grace where perfit Grace remain'd" (1-2). Cooke-ham is where perfect grace originated (and remains) and is the space where the mistress (the second grace) gives the poet patronage, shelter, and livelihood (the last grace). This origin of grace alludes to the biblical Eden; the capitalization of Grace suggests divine grace and holy intent. Lines 19-20 briefly mention the country-house, but it is clear from line 21 on that this country-house poem is actually about the garden. The acknowledgement of the house is important, however, because it lets the reader know that this garden is not a wild, forest space; the inclusion of the house signals to the reader that the central focus of the poem (the garden) is an integral part of the patriarchal architecture of early modern England. Her emphasis on grace, specifically perfect grace, takes this recognizable space and elevates it with religious overtones.

When reminiscing about their time in the garden, the poet details interactions between the mistress and biblical figures; these tableaux always take place in Cooke-ham's garden and are reflective of the mistress's supreme virtuosity and the garden's biblical essence. She climbs Mount Sinai with Moses (85-86), sings with King David (87), and feeds the poor with Joseph (91). Most notably:

In these sweet woods how often did you walke,
With Christ and his Apostles there to talke;
Placing his holy Writ in some faire tree,
To meditate what you therein did see[.] (81-84)

Not only is she in the presence of Christ and his Apostles, she is openly discoursing with them. The garden is the place where she understands the "Perfit law" of all of God's creations (78); Lanyer's prelapsarian ideal is lush, productive, but ultimately ideological. In the absence of regular men, the women are able to meditate on religious matters and celebrate with the holy men of the Bible. They can critically engage with their faith in a safe environment where understanding is freely given by God. The Cooke-ham garden is the ideal space for this because of its liminality; it is both an idealized feminine space and a patriarchal construct. Lanyer has converted it into the Garden of Eden; she removes the traditional patriarchy into the dominion of God and peoples it with a cohort of virtuous women rather than one man in charge of one woman. She is reclaiming the country-house garden, the Garden of Eden, and the fundamental elements of Christianity.

The poet explains that "the Muses gave their full consent" (3) that she should have the power and talent to "content" virtuous women with "The sacred Storie of the Soules delight" (6). The words "content" and "Soules delight" carry sexual connotations—her words will make the

virtuous women feel whole and gratified and her poetry is held in and desired by the souls of such women. The OED cites both “content” and “delight” being synonymous with pleasure towards the end of the 16th century and that they could both be used in a sexual context (“content, n.2;” “delight, n.1.”) The homoerotic sentiment is heightened in lines 8-10 when the poet says, “And all delights did harbour in her breast:/ Never shall my sad eies againe behold/ Those pleasures which my thoughts did then unfold:”; she has power over of the soul’s delight and she finds personal joy in her mistress’s chest. The enjambment between lines 9 and 10 allow for ambiguity as to what her sad eyes shall never see again. There is despair in the notion that she shall never again be able to find such pleasure after she leaves the garden. The “pleasures which my thoughts did then unfold” hints at sexual imagination, but alludes to the power of memory in such holy and natural spaces. In her heart, the mistress carries the pleasures from her time at Cooke-ham, at her departure the poet is unable to imagine the opportunities she could have had had they stayed in the Edenic Cooke-ham.

Ephemeral female-centered pleasure and desire is compounded lines later in 13-16: “Vouchsafe to thinke upon those pleasures past,/ As fleeting worldly Joyes that could not last:/ Or, as dimme shadowes of celestiaall pleasures,/ Which are desir’d above all earthly treasures.” The phrase “dimme shadowes” directly correlates to the “shadowy language” of veiled homoeroticism; the poet’s memory is slowly erasing instances of celestial pleasure as she abandons the garden. The term “worldly Joyes” once again hints at feelings of a sexual nature; when juxtaposed with celestial pleasure, worldly joy seems to imply orgasm; that is, an orgasm on earth is akin to how the soul feels once it is in heaven. Even more, this simulated otherworldly feeling is desired above any tangible earthly thing. It is notable that these pleasures are only felt in the Edenic, all-female garden because there is no male penetration or involvement in the

gratification and succession of those moments. In contrast, these joys could be fleeting because the formulation of a female Eden is inherently flawed. Biblically, Eden is conveniently heterosexual because there is only one man and one woman. With such a dominant precedent, Cooke-ham cannot sustain itself as a female paradise outside of the control of the patriarchy. Although the homoerotic sentiment is pure and initially causes the garden to flourish, its inability to sustain itself brings about its demise.

Despite the women's inability to people the earth like Adam and Eve, the garden reacts to the reproductive qualities of the female sex. Once the mistress enters the garden, all manner of nature comes alive. Trees heavy with "leaves, with fruits, with flowers clad / Embrac'd each other, seeming to be glad" (23-24;) the sun also embraces the glittery streams (27-28), conveying that this place welcomes intimacy. The hills bow down (35) before such a virtuous woman. The river swells with pride at the presence of such a "*Phoenix*" (43-44). The swelling alludes to birth and the phoenix symbolizes rebirth; at once, the garden is growing like a pregnant woman and revering the female ability to repeatedly give and sustain life through her body. The garden mirrors the female body in acquiescence of the intimate relationships taking place. Their female cohort is simultaneously reproductive and unproductive: they cannot reproduce with each other physically, but they can produce in other ways—just like the country-house garden. Without the help of human cultivation, the garden is untamable, unpredictable and wild; the assistance of the women allows it to flourish within societal guidelines. Because the women do not have the same overarching power as men, their cultivation of the garden is more nurturing than controlling. Controlling insinuates domination and the harsh cutting and coiling of decorative early modern gardens done by professional men (knots, labyrinths, etc.), the nurturing is more indicative of the

women's roles in domestic, food-producing gardening (Munroe 7). This is compounded at the end of the poem when the absence of the women causes Cooke-ham to decay.

Lanyer mimics the reproductive aura of both Eden and the flourishing garden by showing the type of parenting and community-building taking place in Cooke-ham. This account comes amidst the explanation of the daughter's betrothal—the main reason why the women must leave the garden: “And that sweet Lady sprung from *Cliffords* race, / Of noble *Bedfords* blood, faire steame of Grace; / To honourable *Dorset* now espows'd” (93-95). Despite residing in Eden, the women are not free from the lingering patriarchal society to which they belong and must adhere to. The daughter must marry and perform wifely duties: “Outside the garden, social imperatives, especially marriage, comprise their idealized community, severing the de-hierarchized alliances the women form in the garden and initiating the decay of the natural world they inhabit” (Munroe 90). The marriage is a harsh reminder that their time in the garden is limited and subliminally controlled by unseen male forces. The poet has no place once the male husband is introduced; he will bear the gifts of the daughter's love and duty once he legally possesses her: “And yet it grieves me that I cannot be / Neere unto her, whose virtues did agree / With those faire ornaments of outward beauty, / Which did enforce from all both love and dutie” (99-102). The break between lines 99 and 100 once again leaves an empty space for tender feelings. In this case, the feelings are maternal; this lends itself to the unspoken allusions wherein the poet and the mistress are raising the daughter together. The poet laments that she cannot be physically close to her surrogate daughter. The enjambment after “I cannot be” lends ambiguity as to what she cannot be to this young girl. The proximity intimated in the next line suggests the physical separation must be endured because the poet has no real claim to the daughter. Even though she later suggests in the poem that she was integral in raising the daughter, she has no cultural or

familial claim to her that would allow her access after the marriage. The poet fondly remembers “*Dorsets former sports*” (119) and “recreations” (123) that she oversaw during their time together with “reverend Love” (122). Her affection resembles that of a parental figure, positioning her as an equal partner with the mistress in raising this child. However intimate this relationship comes across in the poetry (and in the garden), it cannot overcome the absence of a societally dictated title for their relationship—the poet is not related by blood or marriage and can therefore not act as an overseer to this young woman.

A careful construction of such a paradisiacal garden shelters the women while they are allowed to dwell within it. The crux of the Garden of Eden, however, is that it must end. Lanyer meticulously details the fall of Cooke-ham and the end of female paradise and the subsequent intimacies afforded there.

The Fall

The poet describes the grief that Cooke-ham experiences at the women’s departure from its garden and “How every thing retained a sad dismay” (130). Lanyer inverts the images from the beginning of the poem when the mistress enters the garden to when she leaves it. The trees forsake “both flowres and fruit” and their leaves wither and fall from their branches. The plant-life rejects their natural ability to reproduce in order to mirror the female’s inability to create offspring with each other. The poet personifies the natural elements again so that their sorrow might speak for her:

But when they saw this had no powre to stay you,
They often wept, though speechlesse, could not pray you;
Letting their teares in your faire bosoms fall,
As if they saide, Why will ye leave us all?

This being vaine, they cast their leaves away,

Hoping that pitie would have made you stay[.] (137-142)

The pseudo-Sapphic Eden is ephemeral and unproductive. Literally, the women must leave because of cultural obligations; figuratively, the garden cannot sustain itself if the women within it cannot sustain life through procreative intercourse. The Fall of the all-female Eden is more similar to the biblical Eden than previously assumed. Knowledge is acquired in both and proves destructive: Adam and Eve gain the knowledge of good and evil and disobey God, the women in Cooke-ham disobey the cultural knowledge of female subjectivity to men in order to become closer to God and each other. Both are forced out of paradise for their transgressions. The poem relinquishes power to the patriarchal stronghold that negates female-freedom and intimate relationships: “But your occasions call’d you so away,/ That nothing there had powre to make you stay” (146-147). The mistress forsakes freedom, love, and beauty in the face of propriety and social status. The poet’s loss, metaphorized by nature, is far greater because she loses access to female intimacy and societal escapism through natural sources. The mistress has built a connection with God and has her wealth. The poet’s fate is unknown; she cannot stay with her patron and has not clearly developed the same connections with her faith that might alleviate her sorrow. Nature destroys itself at the departure of the mistress and daughter and the poet lingers to witness its self-destruction and to empathize.

The culmination of intersections between ecological forces and homoerotic female tension comes near the end of the poem when the poet kisses a spot on a tree that her mistress has also kissed.

Where many a learned Booke was read and skand

To this faire tree, taking me by the hand,

You did repeat the pleasures which had past,
Seeming to grieve they could no longer last.
And with a chaste, yet loving kisse tooke leave,
Of which sweet kisse I did it soone bereave:
Scorning a senceless creature should possesse
So rare a favour, so great happinesse.
No other kisse it could receive from me,
For feare to give backe what it tooke of thee:
So I ingratefull Creature did deceive it,
Of that which you vouchsaft in love to leave it. (161-172)

The tree expands the Eden metaphor that is working throughout the poem, but it is not a place of Satanic temptation. Rather, the poet is held by the hand and led to the tree to remember pleasures that have occurred between her and her mistress. Once again, pleasure acts as a shadow word for female-centered erotic sentiments. The women reminisce on the time they have spent in the garden together, under the tree wherein many of those pleasures were spent. Grief is expressed that those pleasures cannot continue and the mistress must leave Eden. The tree becomes a place of homoerotic temptation and fulfillment when the poet presses her lips to the same spot as her mistress's. It acts as the catalyst and the gateway for female-female sexual interaction: it holds the kiss of one woman and gives it to the other without their lips ever having to actually meet. The poet holds the act in tension and is careful not to brush the tree with her lips again for fear of losing the kiss that she stole. By using the tree as the mediator for their physical affection, the poet circumvents the problem of overtly presenting erotic female interactions. In stark contrast to the loving language used to describe the garden at the beginning of the poem, she scorns the tree

as a “senseless creature” that is not worthy of such physical affection. The kiss is described as “chaste,” “loving,” “rare,” and a “great happiness.” The poet steals the kiss in a vain attempt to receive the type of physical female interaction that she truly desires, even though she acknowledges that the mistress chose to kiss the tree because of the happiness she found within the garden—even if it excludes physical intimacy with the poet and was placed as thanks for the escapism that the garden offered from male subjection rather than erotic displacement. The tree serves as a memory-holder—like the holy Writ placed in the tree to remember conversations with Christ, the kisses memorialize the connections formed in its shadow.

“The Description of Cooke-ham” ends with the death and decay of the garden. The destruction of the garden separates its image from the traditional country-house garden because it is the lack of male cultivation that truly allows it to prosper. Without the women to nurture the space into something Edenic, the garden admits defeat and dies. The greenery resides itself to “make the earth their grave” and “Each brier, each bramble, when you went away,/ Caught fast your clothes thinking to make you stay” (196-198). Nature clings to the clothes of the mistress in a desperate attempt to keep her. The image it provokes resembles that of a cast-off lover clinging to the clothes of their beloved; once again personifying nature as a metaphor for herself, the poet uses nature’s physical resistance to show her emotional turmoil. Her feelings of loss at the relationship are finalized at the end of the poem:

This last farewell to *Cooke-ham* here I give,
When I am dead thy name in this may live,
Wherein I have perform’d her noble hest,
Whose virtues lodge in my unworthy breast,
And ever shall, so long as life remains,

Tying my heart to her by those rich chaines. (205-210)

She states that the poem is written so that the mistress will never truly die; she will live on in the paradise of Cooke-ham for as long as the poem can be read. The poet holds the tenderness and love for her mistress in her breast again, the safest place to keep her desire since the female Eden has died. She rises above the cultural belief that love between equals can only apply to men by holding her affection in a biologically female space that makes her and the mistress similar—their breasts. It is within her breast where the “rich chaines” are formed and connect the poet by the heart to the mistress. Female-female love is felt so deeply that it chains the women to each other. The invoked image suggests a type of imprisonment, but the poet is completely content with it because it prolongs the relationship even though the circumstances have radically changed. The time spent in the garden has formed a bond that is inseparable and the homoerotic sentiments shared there must die with the garden and become absent in the cultivated, male world. Cooke-ham is only Eden because of the Fall; paradise is not meant for eternity—similarly, erotic female love in the country-house garden is a bliss that must be ephemeral if it is to be effective.

Our Time in the Garden Has Tethered Me to You

The time the poet and the mistress spend in the garden fosters an acceptance of erotic-female attachment and religious contemplation. The dismissal and rejection of that love is represented by the decay of the garden in the absence of female relationships, especially the erotic love expressed by the poet for the mistress. The cultural necessities of the outside world bring about its demise, but the poet finds a way to encapsulate their relationship and experience within the poem. Lanyer’s presence in the poem is difficult to ignore; when she left Cooke-ham and the Clifford’s, she also lost a large part of her livelihood as a writer. What she formulates,

however, is the ultimate female paradise, free from male control and the constraints of early modern society; she reclaims spaces previously shut off to her and the Clifford's and integrates holy elements to validate their experiences in that imagined space. The inclusivity of Cooke-ham and the female-Eden is wholly inaccessible to men because it only transforms into paradise when their power and authority is absent; it can only flourish when free from the damaging, cultivated hands of man(kind).

PART TWO
“THE BARCK MY BOOKE SHALL BEE:” EMBRACING WILDWOOD AND RITUALIZED
SUFFERING IN THE WRITINGS OF LADY MARY WROTH

In the works *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* and *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, Lady Mary Wroth employs specific images and actions of female suffering to broadly critique female lovers and women's place in nature; she utilizes wildwood space to grant her female lovers release from the falsity of court life. Within this space, she establishes a ritual of suffering for cast off female lovers and the death of love and then uses those elements to tie her characters together across works; this ritual works as a touchstone for distinct female characters battling different forms of love, betrayal, and sorrow. The forest is the only space where these rituals and turmoils can take place because it is untamed and unpredictable; ergo the lovers abandon their courtly spaces and decorum. She employs the Petrarchan topos of inaccessible and absent beloveds, intense passion without physical consummation, and the paradox of desired love as painful and extreme (Jones 201, Langer 65). Petrarchanism and wildwood come together in the act of carving—the female lover violently inscribes words of love onto a thing that will outlive her and her sorrows. Keith Thomas notes that trees granted individuals a certain level of immortality⁵ and that those unable to plant trees could “at least carve their names on them” and create a “monument” to the carver. He also notes the cultural implications of cutting down those trees: “To fell such a monument was to extinguish the planter's name” (Thomas 218). Wroth creates intertextual memory by way of these trees; the tree in “Song 1” and the ash tree from

⁵ “Tree provided a link with eternity” (Thomas 217).

Urania bear testaments of inconstant love and persist throughout the texts. This analysis will focus on the interconnectivity between the shepherdess from “Song 1,” Pamphilia from *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, and Pamphilia from *Urania* and the ways in which Wroth embraces ecological escapism and manipulates the Petrarchan love paradox.

Wroth’s engagement with the Petrarchan topoi is effective because she is subverting the assumed subjects—her beloved is an unattainable man and the lover is a tormented woman. Ann Rosalind Jones defines female Petrarchists as women who adapt and utilize “the subject matter and style of the sonnets and other verse forms of the *RVF*,” “it enabled them to write in ways that corresponded to contemporary gender decorum” (Jones 201). Essentially, Wroth is appropriating and inverting recognizable Petrarchan elements to confront traditional assumptions about courtly love and female lovers. Jones uses the phrase “dialectical imitation” to describe Wroth’s use of Petrarchan topoi:

...the poet takes a critical distance toward her model but also acknowledges its power.

This kind of imitation occurs in women Petrarchists from the beginning *because they speak as women*. Even when they repeat a line or a metaphor straight from Petrarch, the presentation of their work under a woman’s name foregrounds the feminine gender of the speaker and shapes the reader’s sense of what these echoes mean. (Jones 202)

Wroth uses these “echoes” to connect her work to a recognizable literary commodity while inverting misogynistic tropes in favor of vulnerable female lovers. She then creates and employs ritualized actions within her works to increase the distinction between male and female lovers and their methods of expressing desire and pain. Specifically, Wroth uses memory and nature to ritualize female suffering and comment on its cultural perception. Memory and nature are intrinsically linked in her works by the recurring image of carved trees. Trees contain memory;

like the immortalizing quality of poetry, the tree will outlive, outgrow, and hold onto its scars. Wroth maintains the image of the carved tree across her works because it is a recognizable symbol and trope, but also because it is a physical manifestation of women's pain.

I am not arguing that the character of Pamphilia learns something in her sonnet sequence and then uses that knowledge in *Urania* or that those characters are exactly the same. Rather, I am acknowledging the clear connection between the two works like other critics before me. James Bromley sees Pamphilia and Amphilanthus's relationship as the "organizing principle of both the prose romance . . . and the sonnet sequence that bears their names" (Bromley 145) and Elizabeth Hodgson notes: "*Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* is Wroth's . . . appendix to *Urania*, a collection (or collections) of songs and sonnets given a title to suggest that they are part of the written record of the romance that somehow escaped its pages, poems exhumed from Pamphilia's living burial" (Hodgson 87). This chapter will view these two works as a dialogue wherein Wroth uses familiar characters and images of suffering to establish a brand of female Petrarchanism.

This chapter interrogates the ways in which Wroth manifests certain actions and images in her poetry and then reintroduces them in her longer prose work. Wroth plays with the concept of memory and pain; by establishing a ritual by which female characters experience and react to these concepts, Wroth creates a ritual for her characters that serves as a repetitive allusion for the reader to gain a deeper understanding of the character's suffering. She specifically uses women's interactions with ecological spaces, namely wildwood, to critique the early modern alignment of women with nature and to distance her violently emotional lovers from the falsity of court life and the curated façade of early modern gardens.

Within her texts, Wroth creates a ritual by which courtly women are able to experience and vent violent and powerful emotion—grief, anger, and sorrow. It is emotional suffering so strong that it destroys the things it touches; in the case of Wroth's women, trees are destroyed with poetry. These women appropriate natural space and ritualize those elements in order to achieve some level of emotional purgation. Early modern male poets used Petrarchan tradition to portray women as wild nature, usually deer, rivers, the wind, and the sun; Wroth uses that trope but subverts it so that women are not objectified. Instead of being animals or features of the wood, her characters go back to nature to embrace their strong, paradoxical Petrarchan love. Her heroines still escape to nature, but they do not turn into trees to hide or remain silent bystanders for their own love affairs.

The ritual is about violence, nature, and memory. It is a formula by which female Petrarchan lovers mourn and deal with rejection in a volatile world. Wroth is widely critiquing these methods of love; they are painful and wild. The act of carving is the most important thorough line for *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* and *Urania*; it is a violent image that keeps coming back because, to Wroth, it mimics the violence of Petrarchan paradoxes—carving into a tree is both *construction* of poetry and *destruction* of nature. This love is not merely painful; it is purposeful action and violation and the response must be equivocal. It doesn't fade easily from the mind of the discarded lover. The carving in a tree will fade but it will not disappear. Wroth makes clear that the same is true with the heart towards the end of Book 1 of *Urania* in the Hell of Deceit. Carving acts as a type of claim, and wounded lovers must compound their sorrow with more violent love acts.

With these careful actions in place, Wroth engages with nature to achieve several ends. She subverts Petrarchan tradition and gives agency back to female lovers. She does so by taking

virtuous women out of courtly settings and into the wildwood where they can physically manifest their erratic feelings of inconstant love. These erratic emotions transform into the violent act of carving poetry into tree trunks. These women impose their lovers' duality onto nature forever and are able to return to courtly life with little consequence.

The Shepherdess and the Ritual

In "Song 1" of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, Wroth depicts a scene that becomes a trademark of her rejected female lovers, Pamphilia in particular. She employs specific natural images to create a funeral scene for the death of love wherein a cast-off shepherdess carves her love into the trunk of a tree, wears a crown of willow, and then reaps her body into the earth to become one with nature. Wroth uses nature topoi similar to Petrarch but inverts it for a feminine perspective while simultaneously subverting the poetic tradition of women as nature. Her inversion is effective because it is so recognizable and opposite to expectation. She uses these images to craft a narrative of unrequited love that is overtly Petrarchan but acutely feminine; the switch to a male beloved and female lover proves useful when dealing with language of spring and prosperity. In this short poem, Wroth uses the death of love, the destruction of nature, and ritualized suffering to distinguish her female lovers from the canonical Petrarchan male lovers and give them agency and a poetic outlet wherein they can foster intense emotional purgation typically withheld from female beloveds in early modern love poetry. The shepherdess takes the tree apart and adorns her body with parts of it, becoming the image of the tree and inscribes her "book" into the trunk to warn future lovers who pass by and then become one with the tree.

In the first 15 lines of "Song 1," Wroth alludes to a familiar Petrarchan topos. The beloved is the spring, the sun, and heat; all of nature, "trees, fields, to flowers/ And meadows makes to tast/ His pride" (l.2-4) and radiate from his presence. Newly removed from the beloved,

Pamphilia is “colde winter” (l.7) cut off from the “Joyes in spring” (l.11). The spring and winter contrast is a metaphor for unrequited love—the spring is fruitful and prosperous, possible of producing offspring and maintaining life, whereas the winter is barren and incapable of sustenance. As a female lover, the narrator is scorned more than male beloveds because her womb and body should be reproductive like the spring, but since her beloved takes the heat and sun with him when he goes, she is robbed of her body’s unique function as an incubator for new life. When the male beloved is abandoned he might feel like winter, but his body is still capable of sowing wherever it need. The death of love becomes multifaceted in the presence of a female lover: not only does she mourn the loss of love, but also the possibility of a family, safety, and protection in a man’s world. By beginning the poem in this way, Wroth shows that she is directly engaging with the Petrarchan tradition and inverting it to produce an effective narrative about a specifically female brand of suffering. The cultural perception of woman as nature purports the idea that the two are closely aligned because they are wild and untamable as opposed to men who are in control of their temperaments. The rejected female lover is especially wild because she loses so much more than love; her actions in response to the death of love are violent but methodical. As discussed by Jennifer Munroe, the garden became a fitting image for women because it was in essence nature tamed by the hands of man. Wroth moves her action outside the courtly garden for these exact reasons—her heroines cannot fully embrace their violent love feelings within the confines of patriarchal structures. “Song 1” is not explicit about its location; however, the presence of the shepherdess suggests that the scene takes place in a wild space rather than in a garden space.

Pamphilia encounters the shepherdess “Who was with grieffe oprest/ For truest love bectraid/ Bard her from quiet rest” (l.18-20). The shepherdess tells Pamphila that her “end

approcheth neere” (1.22) and she must wear willow to represent her forsaken love. The shepherdess then constructs a funeral outfit from the natural surroundings. She wears willow, uses the branches of the tree to “dress [her] haples head” (1.26), and embroiders her clothes with “Gyrlands round/ Some scater’d, others bound/ Some ti’de, some like to fall” (1.30-32). These vestments are meant to mourn the death of love; willow represents forsaken love and her makeshift crown of branches (thorns perhaps) and shroud of garlands conceals her body in the surrounding forest scenery. The beloved is spring and nature; the shepherdess’s choice of natural shroud is indicative of his lingering influence and oppression. She cannot be with him so she must adorn her body with remnants of him. Wroth is fully engaging with the established nature tropes—where Marvell might write that the shepherdess turned herself in a tree, Wroth dresses her up as one. It is as if the shepherdess is trying to attain the poetical level of natural transcendence, but she falls short with her mourning dress of leaves and branches.

The shepherdess then carves her poetry into the bark of a tree (1.33) and sleeps on its roots (1.37); she continues her transformation into nature-thing as she “[wails] inconstancy/ Since all true love is dead” (1.39-40) and settles into the forest surroundings. Her intention for carving poetry into the tree is to heed future lovers who might happen by the place; they will see her words and “right conseave/ And place them on [her] tombe” (1.43-44). The tree roots become her grave and the carving on the trunk tells a story to future visitors of the woman who was “Kil’d with unkind despaire” (1.46). This small act of destruction is indicative of Wroth’s perception of female beloveds. There is inherent violence in such rejection; it is painful and laborious. There is a mourning process for what is lost and a careful ritual for transcending it. The shepherdess’s end culminates with the carving in the tree and her body (eventually) under the roots. The carving cannot be destroyed without the total annihilation of the tree; her memory and pain will continue

to exist within it. Since she is winter without her beloved, the only thing she can do is literally become the stuff that his warmth and light produce—nature, garlands, willow, branches. Her body and poetry feeds the cycle of nature with her death on the tree’s base. In this way, she is rejoined with the essence of spring because she can be reborn; she reaps her own body and sows her poetry in the earth. Winter is reborn into spring.

The shepherdess becomes an example for other female characters in Wroth’s writing; although they are not explicitly connected, female lovers in *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania* very closely follow the rituals of suffering established in “Song 1.” This small instance in “Song 1” acts as the cornerstone for Wroth’s female Petrarchanism. She holds in tension the traditional elements and the particular pitfalls for female lovers. By inverting Petrarch, she gives agency to female lovers and stages a devastating scene of inconstant love; the silent women from centuries of love poetry are able to express their desires and sorrows. While Petrarch freezes and burns for Laura, Wroth’s women destroy nature and then construct new pieces of it for their unworthy counterparts.

Sylvia Bowerbank discusses the elements of *Urania* that are also present in “Song 1” in her discussion on Wroth’s use of radical nostalgias in the romance text:

The text includes numerous representations of commiserations between women and nature: women’s bodies sink down into the earth; the environment is alive with their suffering, as the tears of woman merge with the ‘tears’ of the earth—with brooks, fountains, tree sap, and the leaves of a weeping willow. (Bowerbank 33)

Although she does not tie her argument to *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, the specific images she highlights are active in “Song 1” and proves Wroth’s repeated emphasis on nature mirroring women’s suffering.

Memory and Suffering

Wroth continues her critique of Petrarchan tradition in *Urania*. In the much longer romance, the author uses memory and nature to continue ritualizing female suffering. The largest similarities between *Urania* and “Song 1” are the presence of a shepherdess (*Urania*), the death of love (due to *Amphilanthus*’s inconstancy in this case), poetry carved into a tree, and a crown of willow branches. The repetition of such specific focal points across texts shows how important the process of mourning is to Wroth; having multiple characters perform the recognizable actions transforms those actions from “Song 1” into a ritual that can be followed. Carving poetry into a tree imposes literal memories on nature—like “Song 1,” carving doesn’t go away unless there is total destruction of the tree. This ritual of suffering is incredibly long-lasting and difficult to perform. It is not coincidental that *Pamphilia* carves a sonnet into her tree rather than any other form of poetry because in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* she is the author of the sonnets—her characterization as a sonneteer migrates into the romance text with the ritual carving.

The scene I will be discussing appears in Book 1. Distressed by *Amphilanthus*’s inconstancy and the torment of inconstant love, *Pamphilia* flees her chamber. Passing through the gardens and ornately decorated halls, she remarks how they appear “curiously counterfeited.” Frustrated, she continues moving forward into the forest because “all places are alike to Love, tedious” (90). Once in the wilderness, *Pamphilia* carves a sonnet into a tree and the dripping sap mimics her tears; she lies down on the tree roots and then builds a crown of willow branches before returning to court life. On the surface, her actions are similar to the shepherdess’s from “Song 1;” however, a close reading of the scene exposes even more minute similarities and

parallels. Wroth uses the tree's ability to create memory to connect the dejected lovers through their ritualized suffering and develop the image of the female Petrarchan lover.

Overcome with emotion, Pamphilia carves a sonnet of suffering into an ash tree: "'Nay,' said shee, 'since I finde no redresse, I will make others in part taste my paine, and make them dumbe partakers of my grieffe.' Then taking a knife, shee finished a Sonnet . . . causing the sapp to accompany her teares for Love, that for unkindnesse" (92). Pamphilia wants to inflict pain on something in the same way that she feels pain has been inflicted on her heart. But at the same time, her carving, like that of the shepherdess, is for others to witness; its presence will force them to see a physical manifestation of her heartbreak. This act of carving is not romantic or eas; it is physical labor and violence that alters the natural state of this specific ash tree. The sonnet describes the significance of Pamphilia's action. It "imitate[s] the Torments of my smart" (92) and "Keepe[s] in thy skin this testament of me." She alludes to violent connotations within the sonnet. Love has "ingraven" her with misery and uses grief to cut into her; she states that her heart could have learned to love if it had not been violated such, so now she is ruled by her wounds (92). Imitating the way love has treated her heart, Pamphilia pushes her knife so far into the tree that it begins to bleed sap: "Thy sap doth weepingly bewray thy paine, / My heart-blood drops with stormes it doth sustaine, / . . . / Pitiles I doe wound thee, while that I / Unpitied, and unthought on, wounded crie: / then out-live me, and testify my woes" (93). Pamphilia acknowledges the uselessness of her action, perhaps critiquing the exaggeration of Petrarch's violent paradoxes. To vent her pains, she must inflict similar acts of violence; her heart has been carved into by Amphilanthus and it bleeds like a stabbed tree. The tree, however, will continue to grow despite its violation. Just like the shepherdess from "Song 1," the tree can carry the lover's pain and stand as witness for the past.

Her next few actions mirror the shepherdess's mourning ritual but do not exactly follow through; Wroth takes extreme actions, like literally dying from heartbreak, suited for the melodrama of her sonnets, and adapts them for her romance. But Pamphilia decides not give into her love wounds. Pamphilia lays down on the tree's roots and writes four more lines of poetry (93). Then, she gets up and approaches a willow tree and begins "pulling off those branches, sometimes putting them on her head: but remembering her selfe, she quickly threw them off, vowing how ever her chance was, not to carry the tokens of her loss openly on her browes, but rather weare them privately in her heart" (93). In direct opposition to the ritual of the shepherdess, Pamphilia does not give in; she does not perform the entire mourning ritual for the death of love. Wroth is showing us that all hope is not lost for Pamphilia. She is not resigned like the shepherdess to lay down and die; she performs but does not commit. In this way, Wroth establishes this image of what ultimate female suffering should look like and goes so far as to push her heroine, in a different work of literature, through the steps of said ritual. But the only act that she really completes is the tree carving; this image recurs multiple times through the rest of *Urania* and is a metaphor for the larger mourning process of lost love. Wroth uses the familiarity of Pamphilia and ritualized suffering to make a connection between her sonnet sequence and *Urania*. A sonnet carved into a tree withstands time; it is an imprinted memory on nature. Pamphilia may not be the exact character in the sonnet sequence as in *Urania*, but she uses the same methods to memorialize suffering in wild spaces beyond the reach of man.

The "Hell of Deepe Deceit" and Bloody Inscriptions

The violent act of carving is repeated in *Urania*. Like Pamphilia remarks, a carving in a tree will outlive the carver because it corrupts the bark (or skin) but continues to grow. The wound heals over, but the words remain. Towards the end of Book III, carving returns in the Hell

of Deceit, yet it is not on trees but on flaming hearts. Wroth takes the carving out of the natural setting and puts it into her lovers' chests, showing that the image/act carries over into the physicality of the lover. That is, they carve into trees to make the love last through nature, but love is also carved on the heart. By carving her feelings for Amphilanthus into the ash tree, Pamphilia is also subliminally carving her devotion into her heart. She comments that the sap drops like her "heart-blood," foreshadowing the events in the Hell of Deepe Deceit.

At the end of Book III, Pamphilia has a vision of Amphilanthus being tortured by Musalina and Lucenia, "his heart ript open, and Pamphilia written in it" (583). Musalina holds a sword and is ready to kill Amphilanthus by cutting the name out of his heart and letting the wound bleed out. Pamphilia's name is engraved on his heart like her poetry on a tree trunk. The tree would have to be cut down to remove the sonnet; Amphilanthus's heart would have to be cut out in order to remove Pamphilia. This image insinuates two things. First, that Amphilanthus's love for Pamphilia is so true and deep that it becomes a part of his visible heart. Second, it suggests that Pamphilia's carving from earlier literally marked her beloved. Amphilanthus's heart is meant to show his true nature and that he has been physically changed by loving Pamphilia. Or, he has been physically changed by being loved by Pamphilia. Her love inspires her to carve a love poem in his honor into a tree trunk—the effects of this laborious action then appear of her beloved's heart, insinuating that her fervent affection transformed him.

Then later, Wroth inverts the scenario. Amphilanthus has a vision of a dead Pamphilia with "her breast open and in it his name made, in little flames burning . . . and so clear it was, as hee distinctly saw the letters ingraven at the bottome in Characters of blood" (655). Just as the tree sap mirrors Pamphilia's tears (and figurative heart-blood), Amphilanthus's name is carved into her heart with such force that it seeps blood (her literal heart-blood). Again, the image

suggests that Pamphilia's devotion to Amphilanthus has permanently marked her but it also refers back to her physical act of carving both on the tree and on her heart. It specifically draws on the moment in Book 2 when Pamphilia carves an anagram of Amphilanthus's name into an oak: "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 lou'd" (325). She carves his name with a knife and it is revealed later on her heart. In a similar way to how carving her love (in the form of a sonnet) onto the ash brands Amphilanthus, by carving his name into the oak⁶ she gives his name power and brands herself. Poetry gives her love the power to change another, but by permanently marking Amphilanthus's name, Pamphilia admits his power over her and changes herself. More than just an act, "Pamphilia's sonnets, carved on trees, make her grief permanent and public, and provoke jealousy and suspicion" (Hodgson 77). By making love and melancholy a public matter, Pamphilia actualizes those feelings and allows herself to be perceived differently by those around her.

Both lovers reveal that their wounds are under the skin, much like how tree bark repairs itself over time; the damage remains even if it is not explicit. Pamphilia's flaming heart alludes to the first sonnet in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, wherein Venus and Cupid shove a burning heart into the protagonist's chest. This same heart is revealed in the Hell of Deceit. The carving of sonnets into tree trunks is actualized and elevated with these violent images. The ritual of female suffering physically manifests itself onto the body of the two lovers; they are painfully inscribed on each other's hearts—the violence of love is realized in the hellish visions.

⁶ "The oak had been a symbol of strength since at least the sixteenth century...the king of trees" (Thomas 220).

They Will Remember Us, I Say, Even in Another Time

Wroth accomplishes more than an inversion of Petrarchan tradition. She wields and subverts its influence by appropriating recognizable images and placing them into a wildwood context that is only accessible by women. She gives voice to the silent female beloveds of Petrarchan tradition and establishes a new tradition of female lovers and coping mechanisms. She can achieve so much because she combines the efforts of her sonnet sequence and prose romance and intrinsically links them through Pamphilia and Amphilanthus's love affair. Wroth's newly manifested topos of carving actualizes female suffering and is a fitting image for her heroine's Petrarchan paradoxes.

CONCLUSION

Wroth and Lanyer approach women and nature in radically different ways and arrive at different conclusions. Lanyer builds upon the existing structures of patriarchal power because it is inherently safe. Wroth embraces the wildwood because it is without bounds. Perhaps it is the love that they so ardently admire that draws them to different aspects of nature. Within the country-house garden, Lanyer can envision soft feminine touches and holy books. Amidst the wildwood, Wroth can wail inconstancy and purge the detrimental effects of love. One woman's garden is another woman's prison, and one woman's forest is another woman's doom. Circumstance, genre, and character dictate the safest space for such heroines; the only conclusive evidence is that women must escape into nature to avoid the constricting hands of man.

REFERENCES

- Andreadis, Harriette. *Sappho in Early Modern England*. The University of Chicago Press, 2001.
- Ascoli, Albert Russell, and Unn Falkeid, editors. *The Cambridge Companion to Petrarch*. Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- Bowerbank, Sylvia. *Speaking for Nature: Women and Ecologies of Early Modern England*. John Hopkins University Press, 2004.
- Bromley, James M. *Intimacy and Sexuality in the Age of Shakespeare*. Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Coiro, Ann Baynes. "Writing in Service: Sexual Politics and Class Position in the Poetry of Aemilia Lanyer and Ben Jonson." *Criticism* vol. 35, no. 3, 1993, pp. 357-76.
- "content, n.2." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, January 2018, www.oed.com/view/Entry/40145. Accessed 17 February 2018.
- Coussement-Boillot, Laetitia. "'Then tooke she a knife, and in the rine of an Oake insculped a sypher': acts of writing in Lady Mary Wroth's *Urania*." *Etudes Episteme*, vol. 21, 2012, <http://journals.openedition.org/episteme/410>. Accessed on 17 January 2018.
- "delight, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, January 2018, www.oed.com/view/Entry/49382. Accessed 17 February 2018.
- Findlay, Alison. *Playing Spaces in Early Women's Drama*. Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Fowler, Alastair. "Country House Poems: The Politics of a Genre." *The Seventeenth Century* vol. 1, no. 1, 1986, pp. 1-14.
- Garrison, John S. *Friendship and Queer Theory in the Renaissance: Gender and Sexuality in Early Modern England*. Routledge, 2014.
- Gil, Daniel Juan. "The Currency of the Beloved and the Authority of Lady Mary Wroth." *Modern Language Studies*, vol. 29, no. 2, 1999, pp. 73-92.
- Grossman, Marshall, editor. *Aemilia Lanyer: Gender, Genre, and the Canon*. The University Press of Kentucky, 1998.

- Hogdson, Elizabeth. *Grief and Women Writers in the English Renaissance*. Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- Holmes, Michael Morgan. "The Love of Other Women: Rich Chains and Sweet Kisses." In Marshall Grossman, editor, *Aemilia Lanyer: Gender, Genre, and the Canon*, pp.167-190, The University Press of Kentucky, 1998.
- Jajtner, Tomas. "'The True Forme of Love': Transforming the Petrarchan Tradition in the Poetry of Lady Mary Wroth (1587-1631)." *Prague Journal of English Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2016.
- Jay, Karla. *Lesbian Erotics*. New York University Press, 1995.
- Jones, Ann Rosalind. "Female Petrarchists." *The Cambridge Companion to Petrarch*, edited by Albert Russell Ascoli and Unn Falkeid, Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 201-209.
- Jonson, Ben. "To Penshurst." *Seventeenth-Century British Poetry: 1603-1660* (97-100). John P. Rumrich and Gregory Chaplin, editors. W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 2006.
- Langer, Ullrich. "Petrarch's singular love lyric." *The Cambridge Companion to Petrarch*, ed. Albert Russell Ascoli and Unn Falkeid, Cambridge University Press, 2015, pp. 63-73.
- Lanyer, Aemilia. *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*. Susanne Woods, editor. Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Lewalski, Barbara K. "Re-Writing Patriarchy and Patronage: Margaret Clifford, Anne Clifford, and Aemilia Lanyer." *The Yearbook of English Studies*, vol. 21, 1991, pp. 87-106.
- . *Writing Women in Jacobean England*. Harvard University Press, 1993.
- Masten, Jeff. "'Shall I turne blabb?': Circulation, Gender, and Subjectivity in Mary Wroth's Sonnets." *Reading Mary Wroth*, edited by Naomi J. Miller and Gary Waller, University of Tennessee Press, 1991, pp. 67-85.
- Munroe, Jennifer. *Gender and the Garden in Early Modern English Literature*. Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008.
- Thomas, Keith. *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800*. Allen Lane, 1983.
- Wall, Wendy. *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance*. Cornell University Press, 1993.
- Woods, Susanne. *Lanyer: A Renaissance Woman Poet*. Oxford University Press, 1999.

Wroth, Lady Mary. *The Countess of Montgomery's Urania, Part I*. Edited by Josephine Roberts, Renaissance English Text Society, 1992.

----- *The Poems of Lady Mary Wroth*. Edited by Josephine Roberts, Louisiana State University Press, 1983.