Paper and Glass: Objects of Interiority and Exteriority in Mary Wroth’s
The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- **Introduction** — 1
- **Chapter 1** — 10
  - “Where her bookes and papers lay”: Objects of Interiority in the *Urania*
- **Chapter 2** — 38
  - “Mine eyes, like a flattering glass”: Objects of Exteriorty in the *Urania*
- **Conclusion** — 69
- **Works Cited** — 79
INTRODUCTION

This thesis began with my interest in a single scene in the first part of Mary Wroth’s *The Countess of Montgomery’s Urania*. Early in the first book, the young prince Steriamus tells another of the romance’s princes about his lack of success in love with the beautiful and intimidating princess Pamphilia. As he recounts, tries to bring it up with her while the court walks in the garden, but she calls others over to attend her in order to cut him off. He later finds himself in conversation with her and one of her ladies in a gallery. He claims to be a “dead man”:

“‘And so is nothing left in me but empty hope, and flourishing desparie’” (I.i.69).1

“‘Is there no cure?’ said she.
‘Yes that there is,’ said I.
‘Shew it,’ said she.
“I looking about, and seeing the other Lady parted from me, besides hard by a faire Glasse (many hanging as ornaments in that Gallery) I tooke it up turning it to her, mine eyes only speaking for me. She (with seeing her face, saw my cause of torment) said as little as I: onely taking the Glasse turn’d the other side, which was dull like my gaines, and with as much scorne and contemp, as could appeare in so much beauty (like as if the Sun would shew himselfe in a storme), she turnd from me.” (I.i.69)

In reading this exchange—which Pamphilia later terms Steriamus’s “‘glasse discovery’” (I.i.70)—I felt that something interesting was happening below the surface of the text, and I wanted to read what Wroth scholars had said about it. But I was unable to find any commentary that dealt with this specific passage.

This problem is not an uncommon one for a student reading the *Urania*—because of its density and sheer length, substantial parts of it remain understudied. *The Countess of*...
Montgomery’s *Urania* is a two-part romance that, in its modern critical edition, totals over a thousand pages. It is characterized by an incredible profusion of characters, digressions, and generic tags of romance. The first part, published in 1621, deals on the whole with the chivalric adventures of the young members of the Morean, Neapolitan, and Albanian royal families. As I will discuss later in this introduction, the *Urania* is a partial *roman à clef*, and characters from this central network in particular can be identified with members of Wroth’s family circle. The principal character is Pamphilia, a princess of Morea, who secretly and constantly loves the inconstant Amphilanthus, her cousin and a prince of Naples. Pamphilia is the romance’s exemplar of constancy, one of Wroth’s primary interests in the published *Urania*; many of the subplots center on women who, like Pamphilia, remain constant to their true loves despite male infidelity or marriage. A counternarrative to the valorization of female constancy comes from Urania, a shepherdess discovered to be the lost princess of Naples. Urania falls in love with Parselius, who abandons her for another woman. Urania grieves her abandonment until she is magically released from her love for him, and the romance validates her second love for Steriamus. This austere plot summary bears little resemblance, however, to the actual romance as a reader experiences it. Spoken digressions are an essential part of the *Urania*, and action unfolds almost just as often in long inset narrations as in Wroth’s narratorial voice. These constant diversions to other speakers and other strands of plot give the *Urania* its distinctive texture.

The second part of the romance exists only as a holograph manuscript. It concerns the aged cast of the first part and a new generation of characters, mainly their children. The theater of action moves further east with the introduction of Rodomandro, King of Tartary, and the Persian royal family. Pamphilia and Amphilanthus seem to achieve stability in their relationship
by promising themselves to one another, but both are tricked or coerced into marrying other people. Whereas constancy is the main theme of the published *Urania*, the manuscript continuation is more interested in defining virtue in Christian terms. The romance develops this definition as the good Christian characters fight pagans, bad Christians, and vicious impulses in themselves. Barbara Lewalski writes that, despite the basic level of continuity between the published *Urania* and the manuscript continuation, “it is useful to treat the two parts separately, to highlight the large differences in the worlds portrayed and the literary strategies that register Wroth’s development as a writer of fiction.” For a study such as mine, it is also useful to treat the two parts separately in order to reduce the material to a more manageable scope. Although I make a couple of references to passages or events in the manuscript continuation, my thesis is focused on the first part, the published *Urania*.

Another factor contributing to the absence of writing on the glass discovery is the relative recency of the availability of Wroth’s works in print. Because of objections about the romance’s topical references to court scandals, Wroth was forced to withdraw the *Urania* from sale six months after its publication in 1621. Her work was disregarded until a revival of interest in the 1970s and 1980s led to the publication of modern editions of her sonnet sequence, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, her complete poems, and her closet drama, *Love’s Victory*. The first

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part of the *Urania* re-entered print for the first time since 1621 with the publication of Josephine Roberts’s critical edition in 1995, and the publication of Roberts’s critical edition of the second part in 1999 was the first time the manuscript continuation had ever been printed. Only by the beginning of the twenty-first century, then, did Wroth’s extant body of writing, which Margaret Hannay summarizes as “an astonishing production of nearly 175 poems, the first original drama in English by a woman, and nearly 1,000 pages of prose romance,” exist in its entirety in modern editions.

Wroth criticism has been steadily developing as a field since these texts began to become available. The first major studies of Wroth and the *Urania* tended to focus on topics of gender, authorship, and family relationships. In one of the earliest book-length studies of Wroth, Gary Waller analyzes her work within the context of her relationships with Philip Sidney, her uncle, and William Herbert, her cousin and lover. Reacting to Waller’s privileging of these male figures, Naomi Miller, in her study of Wroth and the gendering of discourse, puts the *Urania* in dialogue with female-authored texts such as Elizabeth Cary’s *Tragedy of Mariam* and calls for analysis of “the ways women have entered into dialogues with other women’s texts as well, and have expanded the discursive potential within their own texts in order to engage the multiple figurations of gender in their culture.” Both Waller and Miller’s approaches are indicative of the

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centrality of Wroth’s personal contexts of family and gender to scholarly understandings of her work. By 2006, however, Paul Salzman was able to write that criticism on the Urania “has moved from an understandable emphasis on Wroth as a female author who represents female desire in a variety of ways, to an increasing focus on the political dimension” of the romance.9 He cites in particular Roberts’s examination of Amphilanthus’s status as Emperor of Rome within the context of the Thirty Years’ War and English fantasies of an international Protestant league on the model of the Holy Roman Empire.10 In her study of tropes of blackness in early modern English literature, Kim Hall had also used the Urania as a key example in demonstrating “how the racial aesthetic of fairness is continually gendered,” arguing that Wroth’s romance “uncovers the ways in which ‘literary’ tropes of blackness shaped and articulated issues of gender and class for members of James I’s court.”11 In the years since Salzman made his survey of the field, scholars have pushed these political readings of the romance even further. Julie Crawford, for example, pursuing the connection with the Holy Roman Empire, has argued that the Urania “[romanticizes] the unions of states of all kinds in the service of the international Protestant cause.”12 Bernadette Andrea has also recently examined race and religion in the Urania within the wider context of early modern English interactions with the Islamic world.13

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10 Wroth, The First Part of the Countess of Montgomery’s Urania, xxxix, quoted in Salzman, 74.
My work in this thesis has admittedly looked back to older critical trends in its focus on the private rather than the public and political in the Urania’s depictions of authorship and selfhood. I have, however, attempted to put my reading of the Urania in dialogue with other movements in the wider field of early modern English literature studies. At the turn of the twenty-first century, criticism shifted toward what Patricia Fumerton has outlined as “new new historicism” or a “new historicism of the everyday.”\textsuperscript{14} This second-generation new historicism, like the new historicism of the 1980s, “continues to be fascinated with strange and marginal details,” but rather than focusing on anecdotes of the singular or bizarre, “the strange is rethought in terms of the everyday.”\textsuperscript{15} Fumerton cites as an exemplar of this approach Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture, in which Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan, and Peter Stallybrass set out as their central question, “in the period that has from its inception been identified with the emergence of the subject, where is the object?”\textsuperscript{16} De Grazia, Quilligan, and Stallybrass are skeptical of the idea that, as Burckhardt would have it, the “‘uomo singulare’ or ‘uomo unico’” of the Renaissance “stands before and apart from the object of his attention, confident of his ability to make the object compliant with his political or scientific or artistic will.”\textsuperscript{17} The subject, they argue, has been overemphasized; what happens when the object is brought closer into view instead? Along those lines, this thesis explores the relationship between object and subject by way of cabinets, papers, portraits, and mirrors.

\textsuperscript{15} Fumerton, “Introduction,” 6.
\textsuperscript{17} De Grazia, Quilligan, and Stallybrass, 3.
While the new historicism of the everyday has encouraged close examination of objects, in Wroth criticism, the mirror appears primarily as a metaphor for the *Urania*, rather than as a historicized object within it. In her critical introduction to the first part of the *Urania*, Josephine Roberts brings up the image of the mirror mainly to dismiss it as a valid metaphor for the work. She distinguishes the *Urania* from more straightforward *romans à clef*, such as John Barclay’s *Argenis*, that circulated with prefatory keys outlining a one-to-one correspondence between fictional characters and real people. “Any topical reading of the *Urania,*” she cautions, “runs the risk of being identified with an older mode of historicism that attempted to decipher texts in order to fix their meaning,” citing Jean Howard’s observation that “such criticism assumed that literature was ‘a mirror reflecting something more real and more important than itself.’” In Roberts’s account, the mirror is a passive object, duly presenting an accurate, if diminished, version of reality. To understand the *Urania* as a mirror would be to understand it as “a reflector of objective and quantifiable ‘facts,’” which the romance definitively is not. Roberts opts to describe the *Urania*’s topicality instead by borrowing the terminology of “shadowing” from Spenser, a metaphor that he takes from painting, and she refers to characters such as Pamphilia, Bellamira, and Lindamira as Wroth’s “self-portraits.” As I will explore in the body of my chapters, this opposition between mirrors and portraits is, in some ways, apt. But I will suggest that Roberts’s vision of the mirror as “a reflector of objective and quantifiable ‘facts’” is not a completely accurate representation of the early modern mirror or mirror-metaphor, either.

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18 Wroth, *The First Part of the Countess of Montgomery’s Urania*, lxx.  
19 Wroth, *The First Part of the Countess of Montgomery’s Urania*, lxx.  
20 Wroth, *The First Part of the Countess of Montgomery’s Urania*, lxxi-lxxii.
By contrast, Jennifer Lee Carrell uses the mirror to describe the way in which the text warps reality. In a 1994 article that remains the most extensive treatment of mirrors and the *Urania*, Carrell argues that “In Wroth’s formulation, the genre of romance, as read (and written) by women, is a carnivalesque (and empowering) house of magic mirrors.”\(^{21}\) Analyzing the romance as a mirror primarily in relation to its concept, structure, and reception, Carrell describes the way in which Wroth experiments with *roman à clef* form and romance narrative to achieve a “double mirroring” effect, altering reality in the romance’s many sub-narratives “in order to alter, in turn, (rather than merely report) the reality that they supposedly reflect.”\(^{22}\) But although Carrell mentions one example of a mirror within the fiction of the *Urania*, the love story that Limena offers as a “perfect glasse”\(^{23}\) for Pamphilia, she otherwise writes about the romance as a “house of magic mirrors” in strictly metaphorical terms. Rather than imposing the mirror onto the romance as a framing metaphor, I instead want to read into the *Urania’s* literal mirrors, and its literal hall of mirrors—the gallery with “‘many [glasses] hanging as ornaments’” (I.1.69) which forms the setting of the “glasse discovery.”

In my first chapter, I look at a cluster of objects that the romance associates with interiority: cabinets, papers, and portraits. Initially I meant for this thesis to focus only on mirrors; this chapter grew out of an attempt to explain why I found it so interesting that the glass discovery takes place so soon after Pamphilia’s first scene of writing in her cabinet, and to explain the ways in which Steriamus’s mirror is not an image like the portrait miniatures that


\(^{22}\) Carrell, 90.

\(^{23}\) Carrell, 83.
circulate in amatory contexts elsewhere. But these objects are also significant in themselves as recurring motifs throughout the romance, and they feature prominently in scenes of writing, destruction of writings, and portrait-viewing. Set within concentric layers of enclosure, these scenes gesture towards further enclosures of meaning within the self.

In my second chapter, I read the mirror as an object that Wroth associates, conversely, with exteriority. These mirrors fall into a few categories. As objects, mirrors frequently emblematize vanity and pride; as metaphors, they appear at moments when boundaries between characters break down. Whereas papers and portraits are found within confined spaces such as cabinets and groves, mirrors are found in open rooms and galleries. What happens, then, when texts are identified as mirrors? I will argue that Wroth has implicitly constructed her romance as a mirror-text, and that sequences featuring mirror-texts encode strategies for reading and reacting to the *Urania.*
CHAPTER 1

“WHERE HER BOOKES AND PAPERS LAY”: OBJECTS OF INTERIORITY IN THE _URANIA_

The word “cabinet” appears in the _Urania_ in two main senses. In the first, a cabinet, similar to a closet, is “A small chamber or room; a private apartment,”¹ and in the second, a cabinet is “A case for the safe custody of jewels, or other valuables, letters, documents, etc.”² Both of these kinds of cabinets tend to belong to women: they retire into them, alone or with company, sometimes to read, and they store valuable objects—and these objects are almost always, when specified, papers—inside of them.

In her study of the _Urania_, Mary Ellen Lamb analyzes the cabinet as an image that resonates with women’s authorship. Her analysis centers on one particular “evocative metaphor claiming emotional license for women to speak.”³ Thinking that her lover has betrayed her, Liana relates that she “‘endured a little space (like a Cabinet so fild with treasure, as though not it selfe, yet the lock or hinges cannot containe it, but breake open): so did the lock of my speech flie abroad’” (I.ii.253). For Lamb, the lock “calls up associations with prohibitions against women’s speech.”⁴ Just as the lock breaks open when the cabinet is too full, women also resort to spoken or written self-expression when burdened with excessive emotion. In this way, Lamb argues, the cabinet metaphor justifies women’s speech and writing as the natural, necessary consequences of norms of female silence. At the same time, Lamb suggests that the cabinet also represents an “evocatively female…representation of a dark, secret, interior space where

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² “cabinet, n.” _OED Online_.
⁴ Lamb, 189.
‘meaning’ grows until it forces itself out into the world.”5 The cabinet is thus a double-edged metaphor for women’s authorship, signifying at once misogynistic restrictions on women’s writing and generative powers unique to women.

Bernadette Andrea also finds a contradictory meaning in the *Urania’s* cabinets, but with a slightly different emphasis. She argues, citing Lamb, that they signify “the contained position of the woman writer.”6 Andrea complicates Lamb’s analysis, however, by reading the cabinet within the context of early modern English imperialism. Linking the *Urania’s* cabinets to fashionable Jacobean cabinets that displayed colonial artifacts, Andrea argues that the cabinet is “structured less on the model of essential feminine excess that Lamb posits than on a model of control.”7 Even though the *Urania’s* cabinets contain writings, and not objects more immediately linked to imperialism, the *Urania* nonetheless contains imperialist subtext elsewhere. In particular, Andrea reads Pamphilia’s role in the conversion of Cyprus at the end of Book I, and its incorporation into Amphilanthus’s “revived Holy Roman Empire,” as significant in the romance’s depiction of female authorship:

That this empire is a fantasy construct does not detract from the woman writer’s ties to the Renaissance ideology of imperialism. Rather, her erasure as an active public agent through her retreat into her cabinet paradoxically enables her participation in the dynamic of imperialism *sous rature*: an imperialist project(ion) that is erased and still legible. In this sense, the emblem of Pamphilia’s cabinet encodes both the closeted woman writer and the spoils of imperialism.

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5 Lamb, 190.
6 Bernadette Andrea, “Pamphilia’s Cabinets: Gendered Authorship and Empire in Lady Mary Wroth’s *Urania*,” *ELH* 68, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 335.
7 Andrea, “Pamphilia’s Cabinets,” 346.
Around the publication date of the *Urania* appear the first recorded instances of “cabinet” in its political sense as a “private room in which the confidential advisers of the sovereign or chief ministers of a country meet; the council-chamber.” As Andrea describes, Wroth figures the “retreat into the cabinet” as a withdrawal from public life, but even as she was writing the *Urania*, “cabinet” was on its way to becoming charged as a political word, and eventually a metonym for “political consultation and action.” This emerging definition is relevant in thinking about the cabinet as an emblem of overlapping authorial, imperial, and political agency in the *Urania*.

In these ways, the cabinets of the *Urania* have proven to be rich and fraught sites of critical reading. Both Lamb and Andrea locate in them the contradictions of the early modern English woman writer’s position, whether containment and creativity, or containment and imperial power. Within the context of these arguments, I want to suggest that the cabinet holds an additional set of resonances. Although Andrea reads the cabinets by way of what is absent from them, I want to return to analyze, as Lamb does, what they do contain. Pamphilia’s cabinet—in this case, a private room—is “where her bookes and papers lay” (I.ii.260), and she also stores papers in a small cabinet, elsewhere called a “deske” or “boxe” (I.ii.320). These papers most obviously encode Wroth’s own reading and writing. Given the autobiographical nature of the romance and the centrality of writing to Pamphilia, Wroth’s main self-representation, it is no logical stretch to connect the action of reading and writing to the formation of self, and to connect, as Lamb does, “the destruction of poems…to destruction of the

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8 “cabinet, n.” *OED Online.*
9 “cabinet, n.” *OED Online.*
self.” But such a connection overlooks the emphasis in these scenes on destruction as a form of control. When destroying papers, the women of the romance commit their contents to memory—essentially another kind of cabinet—thus retaining their own access to the texts while preventing the unwanted access of others. In exploring the place of the cabinet in these scenes, this section will argue that the cabinet is the Urania's model of interiority, and that the sequences of destruction in particular create the impression of interiority by giving the characters something to withhold from public view.

The image of the cabinet runs deep in the language and structure of the romance. As does much romance, the Urania works by deferral and resists closure. This resistance is most obviously dramatized in the conclusions of the romance’s two parts. Both cut off mid-sentence in an homage to the mid-sentence conclusion of Fulke Greville’s 1590 edition of Sidney’s revised Arcadia, which Sidney left incomplete at his death. But enclosure is another principle that structures the Urania. Pamphilia, Andrea observes, “is required to conceal her songs and sonnets at the core of the concentric circles—from garden to chamber to closet to cabinet—that define her identity as an exemplar of the Renaissance woman writer.” This enclosure is a major feature of the topography of the romance and appears at every level: at the smallest, the boxes that contain writings, and at the largest, the three major enchantments around which Wroth structures the romance. These enchantments are, significantly, captivity enchantments—the first, the Throne of Love, is even a series of three concentric gates. Enclosure is also a structural feature of the text. In Liana’s cabinet metaphor, the “concentric circles” that Andrea describes are literalized on the page: the heart of the metaphor, “(like a Cabinet so fild with treasure, as

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10 Lamb, 191.
though not it selfe, yet the lock or hinges cannot containe it, but breake open)” (I.ii.253), is contained in parentheses; Liana’s narrative is inset into a story told by Urania, the narrative layers indicated, in Roberts’s edition, by a double set of quotation marks at each paragraph break. The enclosing punctuation makes visible the motif of concentric enclosure: the main narrative contains Urania’s narrative, which in turn contains Liana’s, just as Pamphilia stores her writings within cabinets (boxes) within cabinets (rooms).

While on the one hand the structure of enclosure can be read as restrictive, Wroth associates patriarchal violence not with the cabinet itself, but with assaults on the cabinet. Perissus describes that Limena’s jealous husband, Philargus, finds her “retired into a Cabinet she had, where she used to passe away some part of her unpleasant life” (I.i.11). There, he draws his sword and threatens her. In addition to violating her private space, he attempts to use her writing to his ends, giving her the choice either to “‘resolve instantly to die’” or to “‘obey me, write a letter straight before mine eyes unto him [Perissus]…to come unto you’” (I.i.12). Rather than write falsely and betray the man she loves, Limena chooses to die. Similarly, when the father-in-law of Silerius suspects his daughter of infidelity, “Her Cabinets hee broke open, threatened her servants to make them confesse; letters he found, but only such as between friends might passe in complement, yet they appeared to jealouseie to be amorous” (I.iv.516). The cabinet protects women’s writings from manipulation and misreading; once they have been breached, as in these scenes, their texts become subject to misuse. The cabinet might be restrictive in origin, but Wroth repurposes those restrictions to fashion it into a location generally associated with safety and privacy.
In her first scene of writing, Pamphilia constructs her identity as a writer at the center of layers of concentric enclosure. Pamphilia has been conversing with Antissia and Amphilanthus in her chamber, and when they leave her, she “alone began to breath out her passions, which to none shee would discover” (I.i.62). She weeps and complains of love’s tyranny until, “At last” (I.i.62), her servants also leave. Wroth takes Pamphilia from relative privacy—the company of Amphilanthus, Antissia, and servants—to total solitude. Here, “she softly rose out of her bed, going to her window, and looking out beheld the Moone, who was then fair and bright in her selfe…but rounded about with blacke, and broken clouds” (I.i.62). Pamphilia compares herself to the moon, “‘my love and heart as cleare, and bright in faith, as thou art in thy face…broken joyes, blacke despaires, incirkling me, as those dissevered clouds do strive to shadow by straight compassing thy best light’” (I.i.62). In these two images of enclosure, Pamphilia is encircled by despair just as the moon is encircled by dark clouds. Wroth might have had Pamphilia react to this feeling of entrapment by having her leave her room, as Philoclea leaves the Arcadian lodges to walk in the woods in a parallel scene in Sidney’s *New Arcadia*. But instead Pamphilia withdraws further: she leaves the window and returns “to her bed againe, taking a little Cabinet with her, wherein she had many papers, and setting a light by her, began to reade them” (I.i.62). Within the chamber, the cabinet and the bed—presumably a four-poster whose curtains could be

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12 Philip Sidney, *Sir Philip Sidney: The Countess of Pembroke’s Arcadia*, ed. Maurice Evans (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), 240. Roberts notes the parallel between this passage and Pamphilia’s scene of writings. In this scene of the *Arcadia*, Philoclea realizes her love for Zelmane, just as this scene of the *Urania* functions to reveal that Pamphilia loves Amphilanthus. Like Pamphilia, Philoclea also composes verses, and when a cloud “[passes] between her sight and the moon” (243), she compares her compromised virtue to the darkened and hidden moon. Set beside Sidney’s language, Wroth’s unique terms of description for the moon, “rounded about” by “incirkling” clouds, underscore the prominence of images of enclosure in Pamphilia’s scene of writing.
drawn—form another set of concentric enclosures. Pamphilia then writes verses, but after reading over what she has written, she “tooke…the new-writ lines, and as soone almost as shee had given them life, shee likewise gave them buriall” (I.i.63). Although Pamphilia destroys the verses, Wroth includes them as an inset poem. As Andrea observes, Pamphilia preserves the poem, on some level, “within the confines of her own mind,” another layer of enclosure.13 In this way, Pamphilia’s first scene of writing charts movement inwards, from conversation with others to private reflection and writing, always in a narrowing scope of action, from bedchamber and bed to cabinet and memory. Through Pamphilia’s destruction of her poem, Wroth locates Pamphilia’s sense of self—her overlapping identities as lover and writer—at the inaccessible center of these concentric circles.

In Wroth’s sonnet sequence, writing also begins with inwardness. The sequence, titled *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus,* was appended to the 1621 published *Urania;* it also exists as a holograph manuscript.14 Writing on the sequence, Jeff Masten argues that “The sonnets stage a movement which is relentlessly private, withdrawing into an interiorized space…in the context of the published portion of the *Urania* they articulate a woman’s resolute constancy, self-sovereignty, and unwillingness to circulate among men; they gesture toward a subject under self-control.”15 The first sonnet in particular illuminates these themes with respect to Pamphilia’s first scene of writing. In both versions of the sequence, the first sonnet is a dream-vision in

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13 Andrea, “Pamphilia’s Cabinets,” 335.
15 Masten, 69.
which the speaker sees Cupid and Venus, who holds “burning hearts.”“\textsuperscript{16} “Butt one hart flaming more then all the rest,” the speaker writes, “The goddess held, and putt itt to my breast.”\textsuperscript{17} Venus next commands Cupid, “deare sonne, now shute.”\textsuperscript{18} Masten observes that “shoot” is “the more contextually consistent reading of this line.”\textsuperscript{19} Yet the spelling “shute” enables a double reading in which, as Masten argues, “the word aligns Pamphilia’s entry into a lover’s discourse (‘shoot’) with her corporeal enclosure (‘shut’).”\textsuperscript{20} Venus, after all, puts the heart “to” the speaker’s breast, not “in” it; Cupid must “shut” the heart to make it fully the speaker’s own. The sonnet ends with the speaker waking and hoping that the dream would leave her, “Yett since: O mee: a lover have I binn.”\textsuperscript{21} As the first in the sequence, this sonnet suggests that \textit{Pamphilia to Amphilanthus} is the product of the speaker’s transformation into “a lover,” an identity formalized by the shooting/shutting of her heart. Her identity as a lover also exists (at least in this first sonnet) without reference to the man she loves. Loving and writing are thus private, self-defining actions contained within the “shut” self.

Another scene of writing in the romance follows the trajectory of Pamphilia’s: inwards, and towards the destruction of the text. Melasinda receives a love letter during a hunt and walks “into a little Groave” (I.ii.272) to read it. The grove is a familiar topos from earlier in the romance, when Pamphilia goes into a grove whose physical appearance corresponds to her emotional state: it is as “delicate without, as shee was faire, and darke within as her sorrowes”

\textsuperscript{16} Mary Wroth, \textit{Pamphilia to Amphilanthus in Manuscript and Print}, ed. Ilona Bell and Steven W. May (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2017), 73.

\textsuperscript{17} Wroth, \textit{Pamphilia to Amphilanthus in Manuscript and Print}, 73.

\textsuperscript{18} Wroth, \textit{Pamphilia to Amphilanthus in Manuscript and Print}, 73.

\textsuperscript{19} Masten, 86.

\textsuperscript{20} Masten, 86.

\textsuperscript{21} Wroth, \textit{Pamphilia to Amphilanthus in Manuscript and Print}, 73.
(I.i.91), and inside, the branches of the trees join together “so close, as if in love with each other” (I.i.91). Even more explicitly than the romance’s cabinets, which go undescribed, the grove emblematizes the inner world of the writing character. The grass of Pamphilia’s grove is like a “greene Velvet Carpet” (I.i.91), making the grove walled, ceiled, and carpeted almost as though it is a cabinet. And Pamphilia does in the grove what she does in a cabinet: she writes verses, here carving them into tree trunks. Melasinda’s retreat into the grove with the letter draws from this same set of associations between reading or writing and private space—whether a cabinet, or a grove as a surrogate cabinet. Like Pamphilia’s first scene of writing, Melasinda’s letter scene culminates in the destruction of the text: on reading the letter, she reflects that “‘when all is done the fire must consume you, that is the cabinet must hold your truths…as onely memory can bee safe, but no reliques save ashes remaine safe in keeping’” (I.ii.272). Her syntactical parallel between memory and the ashes of the burned letter—“onely memory can bee safe, but no reliques save ashes remaine safe”—draws out the conceptual parallel between the mind and the cabinet, both enclosures for the remnants of an unreadable original. The movement inwards through concentric circles, from grove to cabinet, again ends inside the head, in memory and private reflection. And again, the destruction of the letter is less a destruction of the self than a reconstitution of the self. Melasinda writes a set of verses on the burning of the letter, but “This did not satisfie her, grieving for the losse of those kind lines, but each day did shee say the Letter to her selfe, which so much shee loved, as shee had learned by heart” (I.ii.273). The rereading of the letter stored up in her memory is a more fulfilling mode of reflection than the writing and rereading of her own poem written down on paper. In memorizing and repeating the love letter, Melasinda fully incorporates it into her identity as a lover.
These final turns inward to memory in these scenes of writing suggests a property of the cabinet that Lamb’s analysis overlooks. Reading the cabinet as a womb-like site of creative generation, Lamb privileges in her analysis those texts that women produce in the cabinet that are forced or delivered out into the world. For Pamphilia and Melasinda in the above passages, however, the marker of a text’s significance is its removal from circulation and confinement to memory at the center of the romance’s concentric enclosures. What is held at the center, out of public view, becomes the core of the character’s inner life. For this reason, the cabinet is an appropriate metaphor to characterize a private and inward-looking character like Pamphilia, whom Wroth describes as “in company, and alone much one, shee could bee in greatest assemblies as private with her owne thoughts, as if in her Cabinet, and there have as much discourse with her imagination and cruell memory, as if in the presence” (I.iii.459). This passage works in counterpoint to Liana’s cabinet image: whereas Liana’s represents her excessive, uncontainable emotion, Pamphilia’s represents her aloofness and the part of herself that she holds in reserve from the public sphere. It also seems to reformulate the opening of a sonnet from Astrophil and Stella: “I oft,” Astrophil says, “in dark abstracted guise / Seem most alone in greatest company.” The echo of Astrophil and Stella underscores the cabinet’s role as the site of Pamphilia’s “discourse with her imagination” (I.iii.459), a space for reflection in the form of rereading, rewriting, and remembering.

Wroth’s treatment of cabinets aligns with other early modern methods of thinking about interiority. In her discussion of portrait miniatures and sonnets, Patricia Fumerton argues that, for the Elizabethan individual, “The public self that gave outwards upon cultural exchange was the

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medium of expression for a private self forever ‘loath’ to give itself up in exchange—forever creating its very sense of itself, indeed, through acts of withholding full assent to publicness.”

For Fumerton, the visual metaphor for these acts withholding is precisely the concentric rooms and cabinets that feature so extensively in the *Urania*:

> The history of the Elizabethan self, in short, was a history of fragmentation in which the subject lived in public view but always withheld for itself a ‘secret’ room, cabinet, case, or other recess locked away (in full view) in one corner of the house. Or rather there never was any ultimate room, cabinet, or other apartment of privacy that could be locked away from the public; only a perpetual regress of apartments.

For Wroth, however, there is something approaching an ultimate room locked away from public view—the cabinet of the mind, which Pamphilgia and Melasinda partly expose in their scenes of retreat and destruction. Associations between enclosure and interiority also appear in Mary Sidney Herbert’s translation of Psalm 139. Herbert’s psalmist writes that God can see even into the “closest closet of my thought”; the image of the closet is absent from other early modern translations of the psalms, such as the Geneva Bible translation, which reads only, “thou understandest my thought a farreof.” Similarly, when Guyon and Arthur are taken through the House of Alma in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, they find Alma’s three counselors—the allegories of foresight, present thought, and memory—in three chambers inside the “head” of the house. Spenser describes the chamber of Eumnestes, the allegory of memory, as “th’hindmost rowme of

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26 *The Geneva Bible, a Facsimile of the 1560 Edition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 265. All quotations from the Bible are from this edition, unless otherwise noted.
three” (II.ix.54.9), locating it spatially within depth, as Wroth does with her concentric cabinets, as Sidney Herbert does with the “inmost” closet of thought, and towards where Fumerton locates the secret, withheld room of the private Elizabethan self. Wroth’s scenes of writing, Sidney Herbert’s devotional lyric, Spenser’s allegory for memory, and the texts and incidents that Fumerton analyzes all work towards slightly different ends, but they converge in their representations of the inner self as a private room.

Texts are not the only objects that appear in the Urania’s concentric circles of cabinets. Portraits, like the destroyed verses, further Wroth’s depiction of the self as defined by private and withheld meaning. Many of the portraits of the Urania are miniatures, a form in some ways more closely associated with manuscript decoration than with other forms of painting.27 As Catharine MacLeod writes, “The derivation of miniature is from the Latin miniare (to illuminate manuscripts) and not from words associated with smallness, such as minimus, which underlines that miniatures are defined by technique and not by size.”28 Similarly, the technical verb used to describe the painting of miniatures was “limn,” which originated as a word to describe

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27 Miniatures are not, however, the only portraits in the Urania. Asleep in the forest, Ollorandus dreams of a woman “like a Picture well drawne” (I.i.78); when he arrives at a Hungarian castle, his host leads him “into a Gallery where he shewed me the picture of that distressed Princess” (I.i.79), Melasinda, whose image he had seen. A “picture of Pamphilia” (I.i.143) is mentioned to have been sent to her uncle, the King of Pamphilia, although the size of this briefly referenced portrait is unclear. In an episode on the model of the portrait tournament in Book I of the New Arcadia, Polarchos enters the Morean court with twenty knights, “every one of them carrying a picture” (I.ii.237) of his mistress, to challenge the assembly. Despite the interest of these episodes, these full-size portraits function in markedly different ways from the Urania’s portrait miniatures, and I do not discuss them in order to concentrate my focus.

manuscript illumination. Miniaturists limned on vellum supported by pasteboard, or several sheets of paper pressed together to form a rigid card; playing cards often functioned as ready-made pasteboards. The materials of the miniature, vellum and paper, were thus the materials of manuscript and print, rather than the canvas or wood panel of full-size portraits.

Portraits in miniature were also meant for private viewing in a cabinet rather than public display in a gallery. This difference is significant: a useful point of comparison to the Urania’s miniatures is the full-sized group portrait of the royal family in Sidney’s Arcadia. In the Old Arcadia, Pyrocles sees the portrait at the house of Kerxenus while “walking with his host in a fair gallery.” The portrait is more elaborately situated in Kalander’s house in the New Arcadia: it is located within “a house of pleasure built for a summer retiring-place” in “a square room full of delightful pictures.” Here, Musidorus (under the name Palladius) sees, among other images, the painting of Philoclea and her parents. On viewing it, Musidorus perceived that the matter was wrapped up in some secrecy, and therefore would for modesty demand no further; but yet his countenance could not but with dumb eloquence desire it. Which Kalander perceiving, “Well,” said he, “my dear guest, I know your mind and I will satisfy it. Neither will I do it…going no further than the bounds of the question; but I will discover unto you as well that wherein my knowledge is common with others as that which by extraordinary means is delivered unto me, knowing so much in you (though not long acquainted) that I shall find your ears faithful treasurers.”

Kalander’s forthcomingness is partly demanded by the narrative—his conversation with Musidorus in the New Arcadia replaces the less immediate third-person exposition that had been

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30 Button, Coombs, and Derbyshire, 22.
32 Sidney, Arcadia, 74.
33 Sidney, Arcadia, 75.
at the opening of the *Old Arcadia*—but its extent is still striking. Although Musidorus is unwilling to ask potentially invasive questions, Kalander readily observes and acts on his guest’s curiosity. Kalander also emphasizes that he will go “further than the bounds of the question”—the unasked question—in his answer, even though he has only been acquainted with Musidorus for a short time. The openness of the room and the paintings’ manner of display seems to lend itself to an equal openness in the exchange between Kalander and Musidorus. Pyrocles and Musidorus later go alone “to the banqueting-house where the pictures were,” the absence of their host again reinforcing the public nature of the room.³⁴

By contrast, miniatures were closely guarded and meant for controlled, private viewing. Patricia Fumerton shares the account of Sir James Melville, ambassador from Mary Queen of Scots, of Queen Elizabeth showing him her collection of miniatures. Elizabeth took Melville through that “perpetual regress of apartments” which characterized Elizabethan court architecture to her bedchamber.³⁵ There, Melville recounts, she “opened a little cabinet, wherein were divers little pictures wrapt within paper, and their names written with her own hand upon the papers. Upon the first that she took up was written, ‘My Lord’s picture.’”³⁶ Even in the privacy of Elizabeth’s bedchamber, the portraits are hidden within yet more layers of containment: the cabinet, the paper wrapping, and—in the case of what turns out to be Leicester’s portrait—an enigmatic label that tells Elizabeth, but not her guest, the identity of the enclosed miniature’s subject. Melville “pressed to see that picture so named,” and although Elizabeth “appeared loath to let me see it; yet my importunity prevailed for a sight thereof.”³⁷

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³⁵ Fumerton, *Cultural Aesthetics*, 69.
When Melville has at last seen the portrait, he writes that he “desired that I might have it to carry home to my Queen; which she refused, alleging that she had but that one picture of his.” Melville characterizes each of Elizabeth’s actions throughout this sequence as extremely reluctant, even though she had brought him to view her miniatures—presumably with the intent to show him Leicester’s picture, among others, as the Queen had “instigated the negotiations for marriage between Mary and Leicester.” The interaction between Kalander and Musidorus is, in many ways, the inverse of this interaction between Elizabeth and Melville: Musidorus is discreet, Melville insistent; Kalander is forthcoming, Elizabeth reticent. Kalander’s guest is free to look around his gallery; in her private bedchamber, Elizabeth is in control of her guest’s gaze. These two contrasting incidents speak to the entirely different resonances of the full-size painting versus the portrait miniature.

Given the more private associations of the smaller-scale form, it is no surprise that the Urania’s miniatures appear in conjunction with its other objects and locations of interiority. In the first of the romance’s many digressive inset stories, Perissus tells Urania about his love for Limena, who is faithful in marriage to her jealous husband, Philargus, even as she remains constant in her love for Perissus. Philargus, however, becomes convinced that she has been sexually unfaithful to him, and the subplot culminates in Limena’s apparent death at Philargus’s hands. Perissus’s narration of these events to Urania takes place within a cave, a “pretty roome” within “the heart” (I.i.2) of a rock, which is covered with ivy “instead of hangings” as a “naturall ornament” (I.i.2); inside the room, “there was a square stone, like to a prettie table, and on it a wax-candle burning; and by that a paper” (I.i.2), on which Urania discovers a newly-written

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38 Fumerton, Cultural Aesthetics, 67.
39 Fumerton, Cultural Aesthetics, 67-68.
sonnet. In other words, the cave is a natural cabinet, situated, furnished, and used just as an actual cabinet of the romance might be. Here, Perissus has two mementos of Limena that he describes or produces to show Urania. The first is a portrait miniature, which Limena gave Perissus at their parting: he relates that she “[bestowed] her picture upon me, which is all the Limenas I shall now enjoy, or ever did, more then her lov’d, and best beloved sight. The case was blew, commanding me withall to love that color, both because it was hers, and because it self betokened truth” (I.i.10). Like Elizabeth’s paper-wrapped miniatures, the portrait of Limena is enclosed in a case; and like Elizabeth’s label on the paper enclosing Leicester’s miniature, “My Lord’s picture,” the case of Limena’s portrait has a private meaning to its owner that is not immediately comprehensible to an outside viewer. Perissus’s designation of the portrait as “all the Limenas I shall now enjoy, or ever did, more then her lov’d, and best beloved sight” (I.i.10) might have a richer meaning as well. Roberts glosses Limena’s name as “Woman of home or threshold,” evocative in the context of the scene in which Philargus violates Limena’s cabinet.40 But the name Limena could also sound like “limn” or “limning.” The portrait is all the Limenas, and all the limnings, Perissus will now enjoy more than the sight of Limena herself. Although Perissus shares or hints at these meanings, he does not show Urania the limning, or describe it in any greater detail. The reader’s eye only ever gets as far as the blue case. Perissus’s explication gestures at the secret meanings potentially enclosed within the portrait while keeping those meanings firmly inaccessible.

When Perissus returns to his narration, he relates that, shortly after receiving the portrait and parting from Limena, he received a letter from her. Perissus shows this second memento to

40 Wroth, The First Part of the Countess of Montgomery’s Urania, 716.
Urania, and Wroth includes the full text of the letter in the romance: “The Letter,” she writes plainly, “said thus” (I.i.11). But even as the letter appears to be neatly laid open, to Urania and to the reader, its contents fall short of total disclosure. Limena tells Perissus about her coming death at her husband’s hands, but, she writes, “I have not time to speake what I would, therefore let this satisfie you” (I.i.11). The brief letter is both revealing and concealing, in that Wroth provides what Limena has written while drawing attention to what she has been unable to write. In this way, the portrait and letter are vehicles of concealment as well as disclosure. The objects suggest Perissus’s and Limena’s private depths while preserving their secrecy.

A similar sequence later in the romance again brings together cabinet, papers, and portrait. The day before Amphilanthus intends to leave court, “hee spake to Pamphilia for some Verses of hers, which he had heard of” (I.ii.320). Although Amphilanthus seems to have heard about the verses from someone other than Pamphilia, he cannot read them without going directly to her. Pamphilia has retained control over their circulation—the same control that is the object of textual destruction, although these verses have not been destroyed, only closely guarded. This level of control is unusual for the manuscript culture of the period. In his discussion of Pamphilia to Amphilanthus, Masten notes that the extant manuscript is “notably at odds” with the broader picture of “mobile, permeable texts which constantly gesture toward aspects of their own writing and widespread circulation in an open, collaborative, setting.”\textsuperscript{41} Unlike other circulating manuscripts of the period, Pamphilia to Amphilanthus has no interpolations, additions, or transcriptions; no title page, preface, dedication, or date.\textsuperscript{42} Pamphilia’s verses as described at this moment in the romance give a similar impression of aloofness from circulation.

\textsuperscript{41} Masten, 68.
\textsuperscript{42} Masten, 68.
To retrieve the verses, she “[goes] into her Cabinet” (I.ii.320), Amphilanthus following her, and takes up “a deske, wherein her papers lay” (I.ii.320). Pamphilia’s concentrically enclosed verses are stationary rather than mobile, sealed rather than permeable. Pamphilia gives Amphilanthus her verses, “all shee had saved from the fire” (I.ii.320), glancing backwards at her destruction of her verses in her first scene of writing. Even as she gives over the contents of her cabinet to Amphilanthus, she still holds something in reserve in the form of these destroyed (and potentially memorized) verses.

Before Wroth introduces the portrait into the scene, a passage of dialogue suggests parallels between writing and painting. On receiving Pamphilia’s cabinet, Amphilanthus praises her writings: “He told her, that for any other, they might speake for their excellencies, yet in comparison of her excelling vertues, they were but shadowes to set the others forth withall” (I.ii.320). Where Amphilanthus says “shadowes,” a modern English speaker might now say “shading”; he refers to the “darker part of a picture, etc. representing the less illuminated portions of the original.” Amphilanthus’s metaphor figures Pamphilia’s work as the lighted subject of a painting or limning, with the works of other writers as the darker shades offsetting her. Amphilanthus then faults Pamphilia “‘that you counterfeit loving so well, as if you were a lover, and as we are, yet you are free; pitie it is you suffer not, that can faine so well’” (I.ii.320). Although to a lesser extent than “shadowes,” “counterfeit” is another word associated with visual art: it can mean “To represent by a picture, statue, or the like; to depict, delineate, portray,” as well as “To represent, portray, or reproduce in writing or by literary art.”

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neatly joining visual and literary representation, bridges the section of this scene focused on Pamphilia’s verses and the section focused on her portrait.

In between the sections on the verses and the portrait also takes place Pamphilia’s confession of love for Amphilanthus. She protests his accusation of counterfeiting: “‘Alas my Lord, you are deceived in this for I doe love’” (I.ii.320). Amphilanthus does not reply, but he “caught her in his armes, she chid him not, nor did so much as frowne, which shewed she was betrayd” (I.ii.320). This exchange is the first unmistakable mutual confession of love between Pamphilia and Amphilanthus in the romance.\(^{45}\) The sequence of the interaction—from verses to love confession to portrait—suggests that the portrait seals whatever has passed between them: Amphilanthus’s reading of Pamphilia’s poetry leads to fuller disclosure and physical contact, which in turn leads to his possession of her image.

Unlike the portrait of Limena, which remains concealed inside its case, Wroth lavishes substantial description on this image of Pamphilia:

> In the same boxe also he saw a little tablet lie, which, his unlooked for discourse having so surprised her, as shee had forgot to lay aside. He tooke it up, and looking in it, found her picture curiously drawne by the best hand of that time; her haire was downe, some part curld, some more plaine, as naturally it hung, of great

\(^{45}\) This moment is surprisingly difficult to place. Barbara Lewalski places it here (281), but Helen Hackett identifies the scene “when Pamphilia and Amphilanthus declare their mutual affection” (51) earlier in Book II: while they and their friends are passing time in Pamphilia’s bedchamber, the two of them go alone “into the next roome, which was a Cabinet of the Queenes, where her bookees and papers lay; so taking some of them, they passed a while in reading of them” (I.ii.260). “Longer they would have done so,” Wroth writes, “but that they heard excellent musick, which cald them to hearken to it” (I.ii.260). Nothing overtly passes between them before the music interrupts them, but Hackett argues that “Their love is consummated by Pamphilia’s admittance of Amphilanthus to her private literary domain” (51). She uses the scene to further her point that “female reading engenders female writing, and both provide a private and autonomous space for Pamphilia’s free and unconstrained expression of her emotions” (51). I include Hackett’s opinion because it shows the importance of the cabinet as a location. It is striking that these cabinet scenes—even if it is contested which is more pivotal—play such a significant role in the main love story of the romance.
length it seamd to bee, some of it comming up againe, shee held in her right hand, which also she held upon her heart, a wastcoate shee had of needle worke, wrought with those flowers she loved best. (I.ii.320-321)

Curiously, Amphilanthus is said to look “in” the portrait— not “at” it, as a modern English speaker’s ear might expect. “In” is not the only preposition available to describe this act of looking: Hamlet urges his mother to “Look here upon this picture and on this” (3.4.53), and Helen of Corinth likewise looks “upon the picture” of Amphialus, presumably a miniature, that she carries with her. Fumerton notices language more like Wroth’s in Sidney’s third sonnet: “Seeking truthful self-expression, Sidney looks into Stella’s face (‘in Stella’s face I read’) — an inward movement reinforced in his final intent to copy ‘’what in her Nature writes.’” In a similar way, the Urania looks and writes deeply into Pamphilia’s portrait.

The romance is richly symbolic and allusive in its description of Pamphilia’s image. Her complicated arrangement of hair—some of it “downe, some part curld, some more plaine, as naturally it hung…some of it comming up againe” (I.ii.321)—would also seem to have some private and unknown signification. It might draw from Sidney’s description of the arrangement of Zelmane’s hair in the New Arcadia: “some curled and some as it were forgotten, with such a careless care and an art so hiding art that she seemed she would lay them for a pattern whether nature simply or nature helped by cunning be the more excellent.” This debate between “nature simply” and “nature helped by cunning” is relevant to Wroth’s heroine, who is extolled for her natural perfections as well as for her skill in art. For the hair she holds in her right hand “upon

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47 Sidney, Arcadia, 122.
48 Fumerton, Cultural Aesthetics, 95.
49 Sidney, Arcadia, 130.
her heart,” Roberts notes that the gesture “hints at the hidden character of the lover’s ‘true’ heart.”\textsuperscript{50} The indication of the heart might also indicate a material feature of the portrait. Because limners used playing cards as pasteboards for their miniatures, “there are often symbols—clubs, spades, diamonds and hearts—on the back of portrait miniatures.”\textsuperscript{51} A limner might incorporate these symbols into the total meaning of the portrait. Hilliard’s enigmatic miniature known as \textit{Unknown Young Man against a Background of Flames}, for example, a representation of “burning, passionate love,” is backed by an ace of hearts, which Catharine MacLeod argues “can be no coincidence.”\textsuperscript{52} Pamphilia’s gesture could, in this way, point towards literal layers of meaning, indicating both “the hidden character of the lover’s ‘true’ heart” as well as the hidden playing card—a Queen of Hearts?—potentially backing the vellum image. Wroth is not so specific about the materiality of the portrait, but the emblematic image of Pamphilia meshes well with the layered symbolism of real examples of early modern English miniatures.

Although even briefer than the description of Pamphilia’s hair, Wroth’s description of the embroidered waistcoat is also dense in meaning. On this passage, Roberts notes that “the ornamentation of the flowers ‘she loved best’ suggests a secret representation.”\textsuperscript{53} These mysterious flowers resonate with many of the romance’s other shorthands of “secret representation.” The description is reminiscent of a metaphor for Pamphilia’s love as a flower that comes “from one roote, or graine of matchlesse worth” (I.ii.317), a passage I will discuss at greater length and detail in my second chapter. The reference to flowers might glance further

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{50} Wroth, \textit{The First Part of the Countess of Montgomery’s Urania}, 754.
\item \textsuperscript{51} Button, Coombs, and Derbyshire, 22.
\item \textsuperscript{52} Catharine MacLeod, “Symbols and Secrets” in \textit{Elizabethan Treasures: Miniatures by Hilliard and Oliver} (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2019), 95.
\item \textsuperscript{53} Wroth, \textit{The First Part of the Countess of Montgomery’s Urania}, 754.
\end{itemize}
backward to Pamphilia’s scene in the grove, where she had “[gathered] sometimes flowres which there grew; the names of which began the letters of his name” (I.i.92)—“his name” remaining unstated. This secret collection of letters is effectively a cipher, the kind that Pamphilia carves on trees: shortly after this scene in her cabinet, she goes hunting, “Then tooke she a knife, and in the rine of an Oake insculped a sypher, which contained the letters, or rather the Anagram of his name shee most and only lov’d” (I.ii.325). Amphilanthus also uses a cipher of Pamphilia’s name when he briefly goes incognito under the name of the Knight of the Cipher, “his Device onely a Cipher, which was of all the letters of his Mistrisses name, delicately composed within the compasse of one” (I.iii.339). Such a device finally appears on the binding of the manuscript of Wroth’s closet drama, *Love’s Victory*; it contains all of the letters of the names “Amphilanthus,” “Pamphilia,” as well as, Margaret Hannay observes, “Mary Sidni.” Of course, Wroth’s description of the “wastcoate [...] of needle worke, wrought with those flowers she loved best” (I.ii.321) makes no mention of ciphers. But Wroth’s association between flowers and letters, as well as her obvious preoccupation with ciphers, strengthens the connection between the embroidered waistcoat and these other passages. It would also strengthen the connection between the portrait and Pamphilia’s verses: if the embroidered flowers are a cipher, the viewer needs to “read” the image in order to interpret it. The symbol-dense portrait demands a gaze, like Amphilanthus’s, that looks “in,” not “upon.” Amphilanthus is also a model viewer in the duration of his gaze: he “beheld it [the portrait] a good space” before “at last shutting it up” (I.ii.321). The movement into the portrait reinforces the concentric structure of the *Urania’s* cabinet scenes. Private meaning is held within the portrait, which is contained within the portrait

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54 Hannay, 219.
case, which is stored inside Pamphilia’s “boxe” (I.ii.320), which is kept in turn inside her cabinet.

The portrait sequence comes to a close when, Melville-like, Amphilanthus asks for the portrait. And like Elizabeth, Pamphilia demurs, giving the excuse that “it was made for her sister” (I.ii.321); but she relents when he asks a second time. In giving him the portrait, Pamphilia gives herself over to Amphilanthus—as Hackett suggests, “Pamphilia’s admittance of Amphilanthus to her private literary domain” is alone a kind of consummation of their love.55

But even as she exposes her writings and her image, Pamphilia holds parts of herself in reserve. The verses are, again, “all shee had saved from the fire” (I.ii.320), remnants of Pamphilia’s self-defining destruction. Even if, as Barbara Lewalski suggests, the verses that she gives Amphilanthus are those in the sonnet sequence appended to the 1621 edition of the published Urania, the destroyed poems are inaccessible both to Amphilanthus and to the reader.56 And although the portrait is clearly rich in “secret representation,” its meaning remains obscure. Pamphilia’s self-withholding in this scene is characteristic of her defining virtue of constancy. As numerous critics have noted, “Pamphilia, by citing the constancy of her love for Amphilanthus rather than the love itself, foregrounds autonomy. Though her love is male-directed, her constancy (the privileged virtue) is self-maintained.”57 Constancy is thus,


56 Lewalski, 252.

Masten argues, “a virtue constructed as interior to the self, self-authorized and unchanging.” In a similar way, the verse and portrait are love-tokens that maintain the integrity of Pamphilia’s constant, secret self located within that “perpetual regress” of cabinets.

The final episode I want to look at in this chapter brings together textual destruction and portrait viewing in a parody of their effects. Shortly after Pamphilia and Amphilanthus’s scene together in the cabinet, Antissia’s jealousy against Pamphilia flares up; previously, Amphilanthus had favored Antissia, but it becomes apparent to Antissia that he has lost interest in her. Antissia and her extremes are the target of much of Wroth’s ridicule. As Mary Ellen Lamb writes, “Lord Denny himself”—the man behind a nasty set of verses attacking Wroth for her writing—“could hardly have been more cruel than Wroth’s own romance in its representation of a woman writer named Antissia.” Antissia’s outburst plays into the now-familiar tropes of the Urania’s scenes of emotional intensity—reading over papers, writing verses, burning those verses, viewing portrait miniatures—but with ironic reversals that undercut Antissia’s attempts to define herself as a writing subject.

Antissia’s outburst begins when she has “[taken] her way to Romania: whither being arrived, she cald her sad but froward thoughts together” (I.ii.326). Here, not in a cabinet—not even in a provisional natural cabinet, like Melasinda’s grove or Perissus’s cave—but in the imprecise location “Romania,” Antissia delivers a love-complaint. It might be pointed that Antissia is the daughter of the King of Romania, with flavors of the words “romance” and “mania,” and that she returns to it for this scene of disordered writing. Antissia finishes her

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58 Masten, 77.
59 Fumerton, Cultural Aesthetics, 69.
60 Lamb, 159.
complaint, “Then writ she certaine verses, they were these” (I.ii.326); Wroth provides the full text of Antissia’s verses. (A representative couplet from the fifteen-couplet poem: “Turne not the tortures which for you I try / upon my hart, to make me dye” [I.ii.327].) But Antissia has second thoughts about the verses:

With great spleene against him, and affection to her selfe for her bravenesse, she read these lines over againe, but then whether judgment of seeing them but poore ones, or humble love telling her she had committed treason to that throne, moved her, I cannot justly tell, but some thing there was that so molested her as she leap’d from her stoole, ranne to the fire, threw in the paper, cryd out, “Pardon me great Queene of love I am guilty…I love still, I must love still, and him, and only him, although I be forsaken.” (I.ii.327)

Lamb writes that Wroth “guides readers to concur in the criticisms leveled at Antissia’s authorship, for most of the major characters of the work subscribe to them.”

Lamb’s observation is in direct reference to Antissia’s treatment in the manuscript continuation of the Urania—during which Antissia has gone mad, and her faults as a woman and as a writer are the subject of a long conversation among many of the romance’s central characters—but it is relevant here. Wroth invites the reader to criticize Antissia’s work by suggesting the possibility that she destroyed the verses with the “judgment of seeing them but poore ones” (I.ii.327), the implicit criticism underscored by the narrator’s ironic first-person aside, “I cannot justly tell” (I.ii.327). Wroth treats the destruction itself with similar irony. Naomi Miller reads this passage as a manifestation of Antissia’s “mental chaos,” which “is mirrored not only in her erratic speech, but in her tormented textual production as well, which leads her at one point to commit her written verses to the fire for destruction.”

But, as I have argued, the romance does not frame this type of destruction as inherently “tormented.” For Pamphilia and Melasinda, the burning of

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61 Lamb, 159.
62 Miller, Changing the Subject, 175.
papers is a deliberate act of control. Antissia’s sudden, disordered leap toward the fire is the inverse of their controlled and controlling act, marking her failure to live up to Wroth’s paradigm of female authorship as much as her “poore” verses do. For Antissia, Miller argues, “Her inability to frame a harmonious lyric bears witness to her failure to establish a stable position as a subject, so that her texts give voice to the disintegration rather than the emergence of female subjectivity.” 63 I would extend Miller’s argument: Antissia’s failure to internalize her writing by way of destruction indicates her instability and disintegrated subjectivity. Antissia, significantly, does not memorize the contents of the paper that she burns; her behavior is impulsive rather than reflective, flashy and external rather than secretive and internal.

Antissia next views Amphilanthus’s portrait in a similarly unreflective way. She cries on riverbanks, “Then tooke she forth a picture hee had given her willingly when she did aske it; that she wept on, kiss’d it, wip’t it, wept, and wip’t, and kiss’d againe” (I.ii.328). Any pathos that might have been in the evocation of Amphilanthus’s lost affections is displaced by the passage’s comic effect. The alternation between the near-homophones “wip’t” and “wept,” in particular, make Antissia’s weeping and wiping ridiculous. She then delivers another love-complaint, apostrophizing to the object of the portrait, not the subject of it: “‘Alas that thou alone,’ said she, ‘the shadow should be so true, when the true substance is so false; cold Cristall, how well doth thy coldnesse sute his love to mee, which once was hot, now colder then thy selfe’” (I.ii.328). Although Antissia makes reference to physical components of the portrait, she gives no details about its distinctive appearance. She could be said to look “upon” rather than “in” the miniature. Antissia then “shut [the picture], and put it where it was, which was upon her

63 Miller, Changing the Subject, 175.
heart, she there continually did cherish it, and that still comfort her” (I.ii.328). The position over her heart straightforwardly symbolizes love; it tells the reader nothing new about her feelings, and nothing new about the portrait itself. Wroth immediately juxtaposes the portrait, a gift from Amphilanthus, with things less willingly given: “Oft would shee read the papers she had gaind from him in his owne hand, and of his making, though not all to her, yet being in that time she did not feare, shee tooke them so, and so was satisfied” (I.ii.328). She again undercuts Antissia’s genuine (if overwrought) devotion to Amphilanthus’s portrait with this comic detail that reminds the reader of Antissia’s pettiness and bad behavior.

Antissia next carves into the trunk of a willow “till she had imbroiderd it all over with characters of her sorrow” (I.ii.328). Lovers in pastoral romance habitually carve poems onto trees, but it is unclear if Antissia has done so here, since Wroth has not included the text of a verse, as she typically does when her characters write poetry. Antissia’s “characters” could just as easily be prose, or nonsense; Lewalski’s observation would then stand that the poem Antissia burns is the last she writes in the published *Urania.* Antissia then seats herself in the willow: “shee was either crownd, or did crowne that wretched estate of losse, a pitifull honor, and griefefull government: but this was the reward for her affection, and which most poore loving women purchase” (I.ii.328). The section on Antissia closes with this generalizing statement. In failing as an author—in failing to stow secret meaning within a cabinet—Antissia has failed as Antissia, becoming no longer an individual, but one among many “poore loving women” (I.ii.328).

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64 Lewalski, 281.
Early in this chapter, I suggested that the cabinet is an image relevant to many of the *Urania’s* structural elements, such as the three captivity enchantments that form the major action of the published *Urania*, and the concentric layers of digressions-within-digressions in the narrative. In these cabinet scenes I have analyzed, the cabinet emerges as a key image for the *Urania’s* characterization of selfhood as well. Withdrawing into the cabinet, in my reading, is not self-limiting, and the burning of texts is not strictly self-destructive. These actions instead allow characters to control what of themselves is public and what is private: Melasina burns her love letter in order to prevent its circulation, and Pamphilia exerts control over the circulation of her verses by securing them in her cabinets. The symbolic language of portrait miniatures similarly creates meaning through its obscurity—the portraits of Limena and Pamphilia are evocative for what they suggest but do not fully explain. The way in which these cabinet scenes constitute the boundaries and contents of the self becomes even more apparent in contrast with Antissia’s unsuccessful scene of writing, during which she loses herself as she fails to imitate the introspective writing and gazing characteristic of the cabinet scenes. The following chapter will look further into the loss of self-identity in the *Urania* as it is associated with another object: the mirror. These mirror sequences move into open rooms and galleries where the self is permeable and vulnerable to external influence, away from the stable, secretive interiors of cabinets.
CHAPTER 2

“MINE EYES, LIKE A FLATTRING GLASS”: OBJECTS OF EXTERIORITY IN THE URANIA

In the previous chapter, I analyzed the interactions between three categories of objects in the Urbania: cabinets, papers, and portraits. Cabinets are receptacles for encoded or effaced meaning in the form of papers—destroyed papers in particular—and portraits. These acts of withholding create a sense of interiority in the romance’s characters as they simultaneously self-disclose and assert their essential unknowableness.

Mirrors are also a recurring object in the Urbania, but whereas the objects I looked at in my first chapter appear in private, enclosed spaces, mirrors appear in open and public halls and galleries. The mirror, which a twenty-first century reader might expect to play a significant role in the depiction of interiority, instead works against it; if in her cabinet, Pamphil is the subject of desire, in the mirror, she is the object. This chapter will build on these anti-interiority resonances of the mirror, first by exploring the types of mirrors and mirror-metaphors in the Urbania, then by probing the relationship between the Urbania’s mirrors, the broader early modern mirror genre, and the mirrors of romance literature.

Mirrors and mirror-metaphors are unstable in meaning within the Urbania. Some of these passages work comfortably along the lines of Debora Shuger’s observation that “when mirrors are used to view one's own face, they almost invariably signify vanity or related vices.” In one episode, for example, Wroth uses it to characterize a lady as self-absorbed: “businesse she had perpetually in her selfe, and with her selfe, the looking-glasse being most beholding to her for stay” (I.iii.403). The repetition of “in her selfe, and with her selfe” suggests the doubleness of the

lady and her reflection. This mirror is an actual object, not a metaphor, but it carries with it the symbolic connotations of any number of early modern images of Pride or Venus. In the Trevelyon Miscellany’s illustration of Pride, for instance, her identifying attributes are a peacock, a horse, and a hand mirror she uses to view her face. Another of Wroth’s vain women, the Queen of Bulgaria, is said to look between her husband and her lover “as if she were choosing a looking-glasse, betweene two, which to have, wherein she might see her faire follies best” (I.iii.443). Wroth also describes her as “being knowne to love nothing but her selfe, her Glasse, and for recreation, or glory (as some accounts it) to have a servant, the Prince of Iambolly” (I.iv.544). The association between the queen’s mirror and her admirers has a moralistic edge: they flatter her preexisting image of herself rather than reveal anything truthful. In this way, these mirrors, both the unnamed lady’s and the queen’s, express conventional ideas about female pride and vanity. They have nothing to do with subjectivity or self-awareness—exactly the opposite, in fact, as they represent self-knowledge limited by superficiality.

Others of the mirrors and mirror-metaphors have more to do with the self, but they work against the romance’s constructions of subjectivity. As I discuss in the previous chapter, the constitution of the self in the Urania is a solitary process that takes place in private and enclosed locations, mainly the cabinet. Wroth creates an opposite set of associations with the mirror: these passages tend to be set in public places and involve multiple characters who lose some element of their individuality. In the first of these sequences, the sorceress Melissea hosts nine of the romance’s main set of princes and princesses. To share with each of the nine prophecies about

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their futures, she “tooke her company into a roome, the fairest and best furnish’d of that place, and by a witty sleight divided them into the windowes, and some pretty places every one a sunder from their friend, each one imagining she was with ‘tother” (I.ii.190). In contrast to the many-layered enclosures of Pamphilia’s scenes of writing, this scene takes place in a public room large enough that Melissea can space out the nine young people in separate “windowes,” presumably shallow recesses in the walls containing windows. The young people receive Melissea’s prophecies individually, but once Melissea leaves them, they immediately rejoin their companions. When Urania is left alone, for example, she “impatient of her ill went to Pamphilia” (I.ii.190), and “both stood gazing in each others face, as if the shining day Starre had stood still to looke her in a glasse” (I.ii.190). The syntax is ambiguous— which of them is the sun, and which is the reflection of the sun in the mirror? In this metaphor, the act of looking into the mirror does not establish the boundaries and contents of the self, as the act of withdrawing into the cabinet does; it instead confuses the women’s identities. The location of the scene underscores this effect. Each of the “windowes” is set off from the main room, but not enough for each one to constitute a separate room. In Melissea’s room, there are no hard boundaries. Separation between people is only ever partial; Pamphilia is Urania’s reflection, or Urania Pamphilia’s. This open and semi-private setting contrasts with the private and concentrically enclosed spaces in which Pamphilia’s defining scenes of writing take place. In its ambiguity and openness, the mirror-metaphor works against the romance’s model of subjectivity, formed in solitude and in the cabinet.

Helen Hackett writes of the Urania that “There are numerous episodes where an exchange of gazes, especially between female characters, marks an epiphanic moment of
revelation and mutual affirmation,” citing the above exchange between Pamphilia and Urania.³

These exchanges of gazes between women, however, are not always mutually affirming.

Amphilanthus tells Urania and Pamphilia about Nereana, the queen of Stalamine, who has fallen in love with Steriamus. The passage is oddly saturated in vocabulary of sight, which is made the particular medium of Nereana’s enmity towards Pamphilia. When Nereana makes her love known to Steriamus, he refuses her and tells her that he loves “‘a Princesse, whose feete you are not worthy to kisse…nor see, if not (as the Images in old times were) with adoration’” (I.ii.192). By “Images” Steriamus likely means idols of pagan gods (or the “idols,” to an early modern English Protestant, of Catholic saints), but the word “image” could also denote a reflection in a mirror, a resonance that gains strength in the context of Nereana’s later mirror-metaphor.

Nereana hounds Steriamus until he reveals that this princess is Pamphilia. “Then,’” Amphilanthus tells Pamphilia, “‘made shee a vow to see you, and follow him, till shee could win him’” (I.ii.193). This vow puts “seeing,” what could in other contexts be a relatively passive or inert action, on the same level of activity and aggression as “following” and “winning.” Pamphilia amplifies this idea of the active and aggressive gaze in her response that she “‘would be sorry…to see her upon these termes, since she must (fild with so much spite against me) with all malice behold me’” (I.ii.193).

And indeed, during the following interview between Nereana and Pamphilia, “Nereana turning to Pamphilia, earnestly, and one might see curiously, and like a rivall, therefore spitefully beholding her, thus spake” (I.ii.194). This exchange takes place in the king’s presence in a “Hal” (I.ii.193) of the Morean palace, a place analogous to Melissea’s “fairest and best furnish’d room”

³ Hackett, 57.
(I.ii.190) in its implied size and public function; Wroth implies the presence of a watchful court audience in the anonymous, indefinite subject of “one might see” (I.ii.194). These passages characterize the gaze as not affirming and not mutual; Pamphilia regrets that Nereana must “with all malice behold me” (I.ii.193), for example, but she feels no malice towards Nereana herself. Instead, the gaze expresses one-sided adoration, enmity, judgement, and competition. Appropriately, then, Nereana later recalls the meeting primarily in terms of sight:

“so partiall are we to our selves, that I could almost have believed she seemed excellent, because mine eyes, like a flattring glasse shewed her so, yet againe thought I, why should I commend her, who undoes my blisse?” (I.ii.335)

Trying to pinpoint the viewer’s subject position in one mirror-metaphor, Deborah Shuger asks, “But who is looking into this mirror and from what vantage point?” Her question is relevant here. When she looks at Pamphilia, Nereana’s eyes become “a flattring glasse” (I.ii.335). This comparison is unsurprising in itself; the eye is, in Chapman’s phrase, an “animate glass.” But whereas the shepherdess sees herself in Celina’s eyes, Urania sees herself in Pamphilia’s eyes, and vice versa, Nereana sees Pamphilia in her own eyes, as though she stands outside herself and sees Pamphilia where her reflection should be. Although the adjective “flattring” (I.ii.335) indicates a mirror, the “glasse” of her eyes materially functions more like a window or lens. As with Steriamus’s mirror, in which he seems unable to see himself, Nereana’s metaphorical mirror fails to produce a naturalistic reflection. The meaning of the metaphor also expresses itself in a distorted way. Nereana describes her mirror-eyes as flattering to Pamphilia, but what she means is that she was favorably impressed by the other woman. She distances

4 Shuger, 30.
herself from that thought by attributing it to Pamphilia’s self-perception rather than to her own perception of her rival. In this way, the mirror-metaphor confuses what Nereana thinks with what Pamphilia thinks; Nereana seems momentarily to lose her sense of self as she loses control over her gaze. In his discussion of early modern poetics of sight, Sergei Lobanov-Rostovksy argues that “Like the fabulous basilisk of classical bestiaries—a serpent that killed, according to Pliny, both by seeing and by being seen—the probing, anatomical eye is a metaphor that destroys itself.” With the mirror-metaphor in play, Nereana’s aggressive gaze also becomes self-destructive, in that she must either commend or become Pamphilia’s image.

Another mirror-metaphor similarly blurs the distinctions between two shepherdesses in a minor subplot late in the romance:

> “Mine eies and lookes are but true to my heart,” said Celina.
> “If they tell you so, they are but the glasses which I see my selfe in,” said the other drawne to misery.
> “We are al picturd in that piece,” said she, “a large cloth, and full of much worke.” (I.iv.650).

The first shepherdess, Celina, asserts that her external appearance corresponds to her internal state, and the second, Derina, uses the mirror-metaphor to claim that her internal state is identical. These two characters overlap in other ways as well. Roberts notes the difficulty in assigning the dialogue in this passage: the ambiguous punctuation and speech prefixes of the original edition mean that an editor can assign the final remark to either speaker, as though Derina’s claim to Celina’s “truth” renders the two indistinguishable. This effect is the opposite of that created by the scenes of textual destruction I analyzed in the previous chapter. Pamphilia

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tends to write in solitude in scenes that incontrovertibly establish her authorship of her work; because she composes and recites her poetry while alone, there is little chance for her verses to be mistaken for Antissia’s, for example, or the other way around. Having memorized and destroyed a poem, Pamphilia can then lay claim to a unique internal landscape, invisible and inaccessible to anyone else unless she chooses to reproduce the poem. By contrast, the conversation between the two shepherdesses undoes distinctions between them. And as Derina says, the other’s eyes “are but the glasses” (I.iv.650), “but” suggesting reduction; her eyes are only mirrors, no more than mirrors. The mirror-metaphor is also a form of reduction, as two characters become, metaphorically, one character and her reflection. Throughout the rest of Celina’s subplot, too, strong divisions between characters are difficult to maintain. As Celina and her friend, a lady named Rossalea, are talking, they discover the body of the man Rossalea loves washed up on the riverbank. As Rossalea tries to save him, Celina “seemed to lament with her as her friend, she counterfeited not, but in truth sorry, yet at first she immitated Rossalea, first knew not alasse how to greive, but so she played till it was so perfectly counterfeited, as she acted beyond that part, and in earnest greived” (I.iv.642). By the end of the scene, Celina is “full of raging love” (I.iv.643) for the drowned man. In imitating Rossalea’s demonstrations of emotion, she fully assumes what the demonstrations signify. Celina and the other women of this subplot come across as permeable, becoming indistinguishable from one another in the process of reflecting and being reflected.

In these passages, mirrors and mirror-metaphors work in opposition to the romance’s representations of interiority. The emblematic mirrors represent superficiality and vanity in fairly conventional language; the weirder and more complicated mirror-metaphors in the interactions
between Pamphilia and Urania, Nereana and Pamphilia, and the two shepherdesses are anti-individualistic. Wroth constructs individuality most powerfully in the *Urania* by ways of scenes of writing—so what happens when a text is itself identified as a mirror? This identification is at times the case with romance as a whole, as when Juan Luis Vives, in his *Education of a Christian Woman*, denigrates the genre. “For the most part,” Vives writes of female readers of romance, “their only reason for awarding praise is that they see their own morals reflected in them as in a mirror and are happy to find approval.” Jennifer Lee Carrell makes reference to this passage in her discussion of the *Urania* as a mirror: “One of the most peculiar twists in Vives’s critique of romance is his perception that the genre is both a pack of lies and a looking glass—a looking glass aimed in part at altering women. On the whole, it is a strange effect to attribute to looking glasses.”

While Vives does attribute this effect to the romance genre, he does not do so by means of the mirror-metaphor. The argument of alteration mostly takes place through metaphors of poisoning. He writes, for example, that “A woman who contemplates these things”—the martial things of romance, such as “the sword and sinewy muscles and virile strength”—“drinks poison into her breast.” On the subject of love, another of romance’s major areas of transgression for Vives, he asks, “Then, tell me, why do you read about other people’s loves and imperceptibly absorb venomous allurements and enticements little by little, and often with full consciousness of what you are doing?” The toxins of romance enter and contaminate the woman’s body by way

8 Carrell, 79.
9 Vives, 73.
10 Vives, 74.
of her reading; this is a process of alteration. Vives’s mirror-metaphor is less active. If romances allow women to “see their own morals reflected in them as in a mirror and are happy to find approval,” then they bear a closer resemblance to the mirrors of Wroth’s vain ladies, emblematic of pride and self-flattery, than to the transformative mirrors of Wroth’s more obscure metaphors.

Actual romance literature—as opposed to Vives’s anti-romance literature—is more often conflicted in its handling of mirrors as objects and as metaphors. As Joyce Boro argues, the title of Margaret Tyler’s *Mirror of Princely Deeds and Knighthood*, for one, a translation of *Espejo de principes y cavalleros* by Diego Ortúñez de Calahorra, “suggests the texts’s didacticism and exemplary value.”\(^\text{11}\) Since such titles are more common for spiritual, political, or scientific works, Boro writes, “the rare instances when the nomenclature was applied to a fictional composition reveal an interest in emphasizing the narrative’s didactic potentialities.”\(^\text{12}\) The mirror-metaphor of the title indicates the text’s ability to alter its readers for the better. At the same time, Tyler’s *Mirror* still uses mirrors in their negative and emblematic capacity. Trebatio, the hero of the romance, comes to a castle “gated and barred with doors and locks of fine-filed steel, being so sheen that it served for a looking glass unto the passengers.”\(^\text{13}\) When Trebatio sees the enchantress Lindaraza, to whom the castle belongs, he becomes “wholly possessed with her love and forgot his late wife, the Princess Briana.”\(^\text{14}\) The castle’s mirrored locks, like the “terrestrial paradise” of the garden and the superlative wealth of the castle interior, characterize the place as seductive and illusory. At another moment, when she counsels Princess Briana on


\(^{12}\) Tyler, 32.

\(^{13}\) Tyler, 68.

\(^{14}\) Tyler, 69.
how to conceal her pregnancy, the lady Clandestria begins, “The glass which you shall set on it shall be this.”15 “Glass,” in this context, is a variant form of “gloss,” in its sense of a “deceptive appearance, fair semblance, plausible pretext.”16 As Boro notes on this passage, “The added metaphor of the ‘glass’ recalls the title of the romance.”17 Through this phrase, original to her translation, Tyler further connects the “glass” to deception, by contrast to the idealized mirror of the title.

Meanings of the mirror similarly proliferate in other mirror-titled romances. Although Boro notes that “Tyler’s Mirror is unique as the only romance that includes the term mirror (or related terms such as glass or speculum) within its formal title,” she cites as other examples Anthony Munday’s Palmerin d’Olivia, subtitled The mirrour of nobilitie, mappe of honor, anotamie of rare fortunes, heroycall president of Loue: Wonder for chirualrie, and most accomplished knight in all perfections, and Robert Greene’s Penelopes Web, whose subtitle describes it as a Christall Myrror of faeminine perfection.18 Munday’s title is particularly evocative of the Urania’s language of mirrors in its multiple self-designations: the text is a mirror, a map, and an anatomy all at once. This profusion of metaphors does not clarify any inherent quality of the romance, which could almost just as easily be a mirror of honor, map of rare fortunes, and anatomy of nobility. Instead, the title denotes in a general way the romance’s exemplary purpose and value at the cost of rendering its metaphors indistinguishable from one another. Greene’s title could also be read as an example of this kind of metaphorical slippage.

15 Tyler, 73.
17 Tyler, 73.
18 Tyler, 32.
Wroth’s shepherdesses move easily from comparing eyes to mirrors to comparing them to a piece of embroidery, “a large cloth, and full of much worke” (I.iv.650); in a similar way, Penelopes Web denotes both Penelope’s weaving and the subject of its subtitle, the Christall Myrror of faeminine perfection. Within Penelopes Web, too, as Helen Hackett observes, “The ‘endlesse’ labour of the web is identified with the ‘prattle’ by which the loquacious company of women ‘beguyle the night.’ The unweaving of the web becomes identified with the unwinding of the tales, representing both as women’s work.”¹⁹ The mirror of the subtitle, by its association with the “web” of the title, becomes implicated in this network of ideas and images that unites mirror, text, and weaving.

But romances not titled as mirrors can also speak to these networks of image and metaphor, most powerfully Edmund Spenser’s The Faerie Queene. To an even greater extent than Tyler, Spenser brands his work as a didactic and exemplary mirror-text while at the same time presenting an ambivalent image of mirrors throughout the body of his romance. Spenser’s stated purpose in the Letter to Ralegh—that “The generall end therefore of all the booke is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline”²⁰—frames the romance as an exemplary mirror in the manner of The Mirror of Princely Deeds and Knighthood. But the Proem of Book VI, the allegory of courtesy, captures Spenser’s contradictory attitude towards the mirror as a metaphor for the poem:

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But in the triall of true curtesie
Its now so farre from that, which then it was,
That it indeed is nought but forgerie,
Fashion’d to please the eies of them, that pas,
Which see not perfect things but in a glas:
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¹⁹ Hackett, 43.
Yet is that glas so gay, that it can blynd
The wisest sight, to thinke gold that is bras.
But vertues seat is deepe within the mynd,
And not in outward shows, but inward thoughts defynd. (VI.Proem.5)

In this stanza, Spenser positions virtue “deepe within the mynd” and aligns it with “inward thoughts” (VI.Proem.5.8-9). These terms recall the Urania’s language, which also locates the most important and truthful parts of the self within spatial terms of depth and inwardness. Both Wroth and Spenser contrast these “inward thoughts” with the “outward shows” of the mirror—which, for Wroth, is associated with “outward” appearances and locations, such as the most public rooms of Melissea’s house and the Morean court. The pleasing and deluding mirror of “outward shows” also recalls the “mirrhour bright” belonging in Book I to Lucifera, queen of the House of Pride, “Wherein her face she often vewed fayne, / And in her selfe-lou’d semblance tooke delight” (I.iv.10). Neither of these mirrors resemble the exemplary mirror implicitly described in the Letter to Ralegh.

But the conjunction of “deepe” and “inward” with the idea of the “glas” also recalls, contradictorily, Britomart’s mirror from Book III. Merlin devised this “looking glasse” by means of his “deepe science” (III.i.18.7-8), and Britomart encounters it when she has gone “Into her fathers closet” (III.i.22.2), the movement inwards again reminiscent of the cabinet scenes of the Urania. This mirror has the power “to shew in perfect sight, / What euer thing was in the world contaynd, / Betwixt the lowest earth and heuens hight, / So that it to the looker appertaynd” (III.i.19.1-4). The perfect virtue of the mirror is in sharp contrast to the later glass that deludes the eyes of those “Which see not perfect things” (VI.Proem.5.5). Sarah Wall-Randell cites this quality of Britomart’s mirror to argue that it is “a species of visual encyclopedia” and an object
that “the poem figures in deeply book-colored terms.” The mirror also parallels another magical object in Book III, Arthur’s book *Briton moniments*; Spenser even describes the act of gazing into the mirror as “reading,” a verb that he uses flexibly and idiosyncratically. In these qualities, Britomart’s mirror evokes a *speculum* text, an authoritative source of information completely unlike the glass of the Book VI Proem that “can blynd / The wisest sight” (VI.Proem.5.6-7).

Spenser continues the Book VI Proem by moving away from the deceptive mirror of the previous stanza and returning to this kind of useful, exemplary mirror:

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\begin{align*}
\text{But where shall I in all Antiquity} \\
\text{So faire a patterne finde, where may be seene} \\
\text{The goodly praise of Princely curtesie,} \\
\text{As in your selfe, O soueraine Lady Queene,} \\
\text{In whose pure minde, as in a mirrour sheene,} \\
\text{It showes, and with her brighnesse doth inflame} \\
\text{The eyes of all, which thereone fixed beene;} \\
\text{But meriteth indeed an higher name:} \\
\text{Yet so from low to high vplifted is your name. (VI.Proem.6)}
\end{align*}
\]

Whereas the mirror in the fifth stanza represents a worldview that the reader of *The Faerie Queene* should reject, in the sixth stanza, the mirror represents the exact opposite: Elizabeth’s mind is “a mirrour sheene” (VI.Proem.6.5) that reflects the pattern of princely courtesy. This metaphor glances back at Spenser’s description of Gloriana and Belphoebe as “mirrors more then one” (III.Proem.5.6) in which Elizabeth can choose to see herself. The last two lines of this stanza both end with “name”; Hamilton notes in his edition, “The rule against duplicating a rhyme word with the same sense is followed if name means ‘apellation’ in 8 and

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22 Wall-Randell, 39, 42.
The structure of this couplet is not unlike the structure of these stanzas: the same metaphorical vehicle, the mirror, is repeated and inflected with two different meanings. The metaphor has a flattening effect in that it can subsume separate, opposing concepts—a virtuous mirror and a vicious mirror, like the identical rhyme of “name.” This two-stanza sequence in the Book VI Proem encapsulates Spenser’s complex and various handling of mirrors. On the one hand, the mirror is didactic, authoritative, and emblematic of *The Faerie Queene’s* central ideals and pursuits; on the other hand, it is blinding, flattering, and untrustworthy.

For these authors, the mirror is a natural metaphor for the romance text—but that metaphor can hold a wide range of meaning. Vives, writing against romance as a whole, sees the genre as a mirror only in its capacity as flattering and imitative. Authors writing within the genre tend to take a double stance on the mirror. Tyler’s mirror-title, Munday’s and Greene’s mirror-subtitles, and Spenser’s paratextual language all announce the didactic and exemplary intentions of the texts. But these definitions of the mirror never remain stable. For Tyler, the mirror can signify deception as well as exemplary virtue. Munday and Greene, even within their titles, seem to lose control over the mirror-metaphor: the mirror combines with the anatomy, the map, and the web, and the combinations obscure the individual sense of any one of these title-metaphors. Like Tyler, Spenser writes mirrors that signify virtue and truth as well as mirrors that signify vice and falsehood; like Munday and Green, his mirrors irrepressibly mix with other symbols and ideas.

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23 Spenser, 602.
Within the context of these romance writings and the *Urania*’s metaphors, I will next look at Wroth’s mirror-texts. These examples are in different places on the spectrum of “mirror” and text”: some are looking-glasses, some books, some oral stories identified as mirrors. They form a coherent group in that they all present literary models to the characters of the romance. This section will explore how Wroth’s mirror-metaphors of vanity, exteriority, and loss of self inform her depiction of these kinds of texts, when writing has an opposite set of associations with interiority and self-definition.

For Pamphilia, the solution is to reject the mirror. At one moment, Pamphilia reads a book whose “subject was Love, and the story she then was reading, the affection of a Lady to a brave Gentleman, who equally loved, but being a man, it was necessary for him to exceede a woman in all things, so much as inconstancie was found fit for him to excell her in, hee left her for a new” (I.ii.317). This passage has received substantial attention for its relevance to a variety of issues of critical interest in the *Urania*. Roberts’s commentary on this passage focuses on the “question of which sex was more constant.” Lamb notes the recursive quality of the book in its “striking similarity to Wroth’s own romance,” and she remarks that “The same cultural texts that determine the contents of a book determine as well the behavior of its readers. As a member of the same culture that formed her book, Pamphilia is forced to experience within her own life the plot of the very text she had rejected.” These commentaries taken together, however, suggest the way in which Pamphilia’s book seems less intended to depict a specific and original love story than a generic model of a certain kind of love story. The synopsis of the book,

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25 Lamb, 191.
after all, describes unnamed types—“a Lady,” “a brave Gentleman”—not individuals. It also emphasizes abstractions, such as love and constancy, rather than specificities of plot.

Another way to read Pamphilia’s book, then, is as a literary mirror. The abstract nature of the story, taken together with the phrasing that the “subject” of the book was “Love,” distinct from the specific “story she then was reading,” suggests a compilatory text. Mirrors commonly took the form of compilations. In *A Mirror for Magistrates*, for example, a variety of famous historical figures recount their downfalls in verse complaints. A *Mirror for Magistrates* was one of the most popular and influential mirrors—it went through eight editions between 1559 and 1609, and such writers as Spenser, Shakespeare, Samuel Daniel, and Michael Drayton used it as a source in their works—and a sampling of other narrative mirrors reveals similar structures. The *Foure notable Histories, applyed to foure worthy examples*, for example, a didactic mirror-text published in 1590, is divided into sections with the subtitles “A spectacle for negligent Parents,” “A glasse for disobedient Sonnes,” and “A myrrour for virtuous Maydes.” The text of the book combines moral lessons with short stories that illustrate those morals. In Greene’s *Penelopes Web* [...] *a christall mirror of feminine perfection*, Penelope tells three unrelated tales over the course of three nights as she and her ladies unweave her day’s work. Books not explicitly identified as mirrors could be compilatory—as is Marguerite de Navarre’s *Heptaméron*, a text I will discuss later in this chapter—and mirrors took a range of forms besides narrative

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compilations. But within the context of the romance, I argue that Pamphilia’s book can be read convincingly and productively as an example of the mirror genre.

The book’s status as a literary mirror becomes significant with Pamphilia’s reaction to the story. Having read the story of inconstant love, Pamphilia first apostrophizes, “‘Poor love…how doth all storyes, and every writer use thee at their pleasure, apparelling thee acording to their various fancies? cast thou suffer thy selfe to be thus put in cloathes, nay raggs instead of vertuous habits?’” (I.ii.317). For Pamphilia, love is a stable and definite character, dressed in many ways by its different fictional representations. This concern with appearances is consistent with the Urania’s other mirror-metaphors. But whereas Celina transforms her feelings by affecting Rossalea’s outward show of emotions, Pamphilia draws a hard boundary between internal and external; these stories and writers superficially alter love’s appearance without changing its true form. Pamphilia also asserts a hard boundary between herself and the mirror: she finishes her address to love, “Then threw she away the booke, and walked up and downe, her hand on her heart” (I.ii.317). In one long sentence, Pamphilia’s rejection of the mirror flows into a third-person reflection on the nature of “his love, and hers” (I.ii.317):

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\text{this affection was but one in truth, and being as come from one roote…brought forth but one flower, whose delicacy, and goodnesse was in it selfe. Many flowers shewes as faire as a Rose to the eye, but none so sweete: so were many loves as brave in shew, but none so sweetely chast, and therefore rich in worth. (I.ii.317)}
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The mirror that Pamphilia reads is nameless and anonymizing, but her rejection of it reaffirms the singularity of her constancy in the form of this “one flower” (I.ii.317). It also fixes her place within a specifically named literary tradition through the allusive phrase “rich in worth” (I.ii.317). In Astrophil and Stella, Sidney puns on the married name of Penelope Devereux Rich: after a catalogue of the virtues in which Stella is “rich,” for example, Astrophil
writes that she, “though most rich in these, and every part / Which makes the patents of true worldly bliss, / Hath no misfortune, but that Rich she is.”

Wroth and other poets similarly pun on her married name. After her wedding to Robert Wroth, Ben Jonson reported to a friend that Mary was “unworthily married on a Jealous husband.” Numerous laudatory poems by other authors, claiming that the “r” in her name is misplaced, praise her for her “worth.”

“Rich in worth” (I.ii.317), then, has double Sidneian resonances—rich in worth, Rich in Wroth. Like the 1621 title page, the phrase acts as a reminder that the Urania is “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 Sir Phillips Sidney knight. And to the most excellent Lady Mary Countesse of Pembroke late deceased.” Pamphilia’s rejection of the mirror thus reasserts her unique degree of constancy in love and her particular literary heritage.

In this passage, Wroth also represents Pamphilia as she will be represented in her portrait miniature only pages later. Read in sequence, Pamphilia holds her hand over her heart in conjunction with this flower image; she delivers a love-complaint; she listens to music and talks with Antissia and Amphilanthus; she brings Amphilanthus into her closet, where he sees her portrait. In this portrait, as I discussed in the previous chapter, she holds her hand over her heart and wears a waistcoat embroidered with flowers. It is as though this deeply inward-looking portrait captures her image at the moment of her rejection of the mirror. In these ways, Pamphilia’s book does further the romance’s depiction of her interiority, but by different means.

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28 Sidney, The Major Works, 167. Katherine Duncan-Jones notes that this sonnet appears in only one manuscript and was not printed until 1598. She suggests, “It may have been suppressed from circulated texts because the attack on Lord Rich was too explicit” (362).

29 Wroth, The First Part of the Countess of Montgomery’s Urania, xc.

30 Hannay, 158-159.

31 Wroth, The First Part of the Countess of Montgomery’s Urania, cxxi.
than the verses or papers that I analyzed in the last chapter. By bringing their verses into their cabinets, or into their memories, the women writers of the *Urania* define the contents of their individual and secret selves. But Pamphilia defines herself by throwing the book away rather than taking it in.

This pattern of rejection recurs in Pamphilia’s other encounters with mirror-texts. Limena tells Pamphilia a story that she explicitly identifies as a mirror:

> “yet if you doe desire to heare, of Love, and of loves crosses, I will tell you a discourse, the Sceane shall be in my Countrey, and the rather will I tell it, since in that, you shall see your selfe truly free from such distresse, as in a perfect glasse, none of your true perfections can be hidden, but take not this tale for truth”  
> (I.ii.226)

Limena’s introduction of her mirror contains interlocking sets of duplicate words: “perfect” and “true,” “perfections” and “truth.” The shifting forms of these words suggest the potentially transformative effects of the glass. Jennifer Lee Carrell focuses on this transformative potential in her reading of Limena’s mirror: “Uranian tales mingle fact and fiction to fulfill a spiral function: to alter (or fictionalize) the reflections of ‘reality’ found within romance and then to project such altered reflections (or fictions) back out of the romance to alter the original ‘reality.”  

32 She draws attention to the resemblance of the plot of Limena’s story to the love triangle between Pamphilia, Amphilanthus, and Antissia. This resemblance is significant, but I want to focus on Pamphilia’s reaction, which is to retreat inwards:

> “Why,” said she to her selfe, “should all chuse: these or such like wofull histories, of purpose to torment me with feare, that I may live to see like woes? alas, Love sheild me from such harm; I now behold cleere joy, so did Silviana, and Alena, and Pelia, yet what conclusion have they? utter ruine and distresse for reward.”  

These thoughts so inwardly afflicted her, as she sat still, her colour not changing, nor any motion in her outward part, while the soule onely wrought in her, and yet,

32 Carrell, 83.
not to let the world be ignorant of her opration, sent teares from out her eyes, to witnesse the affliction that she felt. (I.ii.229)

Most complaints in the _Urania_ are spoken, as is typical for the romance genre, but Pamphilia’s complaint here takes place “inwardly” (I.ii.229)—as Carrell observes, “Pamphilia notes her reflected image only to herself.” Limena is present through all of Pamphilia’s inward complaint and tries to comfort her, but this moment does not become not one of mutual gazing and mutual affirmation; Pamphilia behaves here, as Wroth later describes her, “in company, and alone much one, shee could bee in greatest assemblies as private with her owne thoughts, as if in her Cabinet, and there have as much discourse with her imagination and cruell memory, as if in the presence” (I.iii.459). Pamphilia’s reaction to Limena’s mirror is thus a turning inwards to make an unspoken complaint unusual, if not totally unique, in the _Urania_.

In these two previous examples, Pamphilia encounters stories or books that can be identified as mirrors; in the third example that I want to look at, Pamphilia handles a mirror that can be identified as a text. It appears in an inset narrative: in the woods, Amphilenphantus comes across Steriamus, another young prince, who tells Amphilenphantus about his love for Pamphilia and his attempts to court her. His unsuccessful courtship culminates in an exchange that takes place “in a round window in a great Galerie” (I.i.68), a setting reminiscent of the “windowes” (I.ii.190) of Melissea’s palace. Steriamus relates that he told Pamphilia that he was a “dead man” (I.i.69), and Pamphilia challenged him to show her a cure to his despair:

“I looking about, and seeing…hard by a faire Glasse (many hanging as ornaments in that Gallery) I tooke it up turning it to her, mine eyes onely speaking for me. She (with seeing her face, saw my cause of torment) said as little as I: onely taking the Glasse turn’d the other side, which was dull like my gaines, and with as much scorne and contempt, as could appeare in so much beauty (like as if the Sun would in spite shew himselfe in a storme), she turnd from me.” (I.i.69)

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33 Carrell, 84.
The mirror is striking for the ways in which it succeeds and fails to behave like a mirror. The passage is full of repeated actions and parallel structures that suggest reflections. Forms of “turn” are repeated three times: “I tooke it up turning it to her…[Pamphilia] taking the Glasse turn’d the other side…she turnd from me” (I.i.69). Steriamus also reports in two sets of parallels that Pamphilia “(with seeing her face, saw my cause of torment) said as little as I” (I.i.69). Actions are performed, then duplicated, suggesting the corollary duplication in the mirror’s reflection. Yet although the language of the passage plays with the idea of reflections, the mirror itself fails to reflect. Steriamus holds it up to Pamphilia, presumably with the dull side facing him. When she turns the mirror to “the other side” (I.i.69), what he should then see is his face in the reflective part of the mirror—but he instead continues to describe the dull side of the mirror, “dull like my gaines” (I.i.69), the side no longer visible to him. Steriamus seems unable to confront his own reflection in the now-inert mirror.

Maybe Steriamus does not see himself because this mirror is meant to be read rather than to reflect: the love-confession via mirror recalls a couple of moments from other romance or romance-adjacent texts, making this sequence a kind of scene of reading. In Bartholomew Yonge’s translation of Montemayor’s *Diana*, Sylvanus tells Syrenus that he saw Diana “‘one day sitting with thee neere to yon little brooke, when she was kembing her golden haire, and thou holding the glasse unto her, wherein now and then she beheld her divine figure…thou sungest upon the holding of the glasse, whiles she was addressing her resplendent tresses.’” The mirror signifies the lover’s privileged access to his beloved and their mutual affection. Steriamus offers

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Pamphilia an image of herself as Diana—a typified object of love, not an individual—which she reads and rejects.

The scene is also suggestive of a sequence from Marguerite de Navarre’s *Heptaméron*. The *Heptaméron* is, as I mentioned briefly above, a compilatory text on the model of Bocaccio’s *Decameron*. On the third day, Dagoucin tells the story of Elisor, a gentleman in the court of Castile who is handsome and accomplished but has no apparent attachment to any woman. The queen of Castile presses Elisor to reveal that he is in love, but he refuses to tell her with whom, only promising that he will show her the lady the next time she goes hunting. In preparation for the hunt, “Ellisor…fist faire ung grant mirouer d’acier en façon d’un hallecret, et, le mectant devant son estoumach, le couvrit tresbien d’un grant manteau de frize noire.”

During the hunt, Elisor reveals the mirror to the queen, but when they speak later, she pretends not to understand the meaning of what he has shown her:

Elle, faisant la mescogneue, luy dist qu’elle n’avoit poinct entendu qu’il luy eust monstré une seule de ses femmes. “Il est vray, Madam, dist Elisor, mais que vous ay je monstré, en vous descendant de cheval ? —Rien, dist la royne, sinon ung mirouer devant vostre estoumach. —Et, en ce mirouer, Madame, qu’esse qu vous avez veu ? dist Elisor. —Je n’y ay vue que moy seule,” respondit la royne.

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36 Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptaméron*, 240. “The Queen pretending not to understand him, did reply unto him, That she did not remember that he had shewed any one of her Ladies to her. It is true, said Elisor, But what did I show unto you, as you were alighting from your Horse? Nothing, said the Queene, but only a fair Glass upon your Brest: And what did you behold in that Mirror, said Elisor? I saw nothing but my own face, said the Queen” (Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptameron*, trans. Codrington, 223).
The queen’s language of negation and reduction—she says that she saw “Rien...sinon ung mirouer,” “Je n’y ay vue que moy seule”—recalls the way in which Derina reduces Celina’s eyes to “but the glasses which I see my selfe in.” (I.iv.650), as well as Spenser’s identical rhyme of “name” concluding his double mirror-metaphor. The mirror has a tendency to flatten language out—everything is like everything else, and everything is only a mirror.

Steriamus and Pamphilia’s analogous conversation is similarly dominated by the mirror, but Pamphilia rhetorically turns it to the dull side: “‘If you have,’ said she, ‘any busines, I shalbe ready to do you any service in it: but if it be concerning your glasse discovery, know this, you shall doe best to bee silent; for a greater offence you cannot do mee’” (I.i.70). The scene from the *Heptaméron* underscores Pamphilia’s refusal to let the mirror insinuate itself back into their conversation. In Elisor’s borderline inane exchange with the queen, the mirror endlessly reflects images of itself; with Pamphilia’s indirect term for the love-confession, the “glasse discovery” (I.i.70), she picks the mirror back up before decisively laying it aside. In this double rejection of the mirror, Pamphilia rejects the narrative force of Steriamus’s gesture, as well as his love-confession. In the mirror, Pamphilia becomes Steriamus’s Pamphilia, like Syrenus’s Diana, or like Elisor’s queen—only an intertextual mirror-image. By turning the glass, Pamphilia refuses these parallels and asserts her self-possession.

The *Urania*’s textual mirrors, like its mirror-metaphors, are concerned with outward forms that threaten to effect total transformation. With her book and Limena’s story, Pamphilia understands the potential correspondence between her life and the fictional plot, and she pushes the imposed narrative away from herself. The glass discovery is even more clearly an external and unwanted imposition. In the moment of her reactions, Pamphilia succeeds in asserting her
individuality against the sameness of the narrative mirrors—even if, in the long run of the romance, she fails. The plots of inconstancy in Pamphilia’s book and in Limena’s mirror are, after all, nearly identical to the macro-plot of the *Urania*, with its alternating periods of mutual affection and unrequited affection between Pamphilia and Amphilanthus. Pamphilia even fails, on some level, to reject Steriamus’s mirror. In the manuscript continuation, she ultimately marries a suitor who courts her in a not dissimilar way: Rodomandro, the King of Tartary, offers to be Pamphilia’s bookstand: “‘Love your booke, butt love mee soe farr as that I may hold itt to you that, while you peruse that, I may Joye in beeholding you’” (II.ii.272). Like Steriamus, Rodomandro wants to be Syrenus to Pamphilia’s Diana—the book, like the mirror, enables the lover’s proximity to his beloved. In these ways, there is a double force to the *Urania*’s mirror-texts: however true the reflections might be in the grand scheme of the romance, the individual is defined through her refusal to capitulate to the narrative teleology of the mirror.

In the last section of this chapter, I want to look at an example of an ideal reader whose identity takes shape solely in relation to a series of rejections of mirrors and texts. The Queen of Naples, Perissus, and Limena come across this lady, identified as Dorolina in a later passage, but who introduces herself here as “a Gentlewoman, though ungently used by Love, my name not worthy of Knowledge” (I.iii.491). She behaves distractedly, rails against love, and tells them the story of her abandonment by her lover. Her story culminates with the recitation of verses she sent to her lover, which she wrote “upon the subject of many unhappy Women” (I.iii.492):

Deare, though unconstant, these I send to you
As witnesses, that still my Love is true.
Receive these Lines as Images of Death,
That beare the Infants of my latest breath,
And to my tryumph, though I dye in woe,
With welcome glory, since you will it so,
Especially, my ending is the lesse,
When I Examples see of my distresse. (I.iii.492-493)

The poem runs through five “Examples” in total: Dido, Ariadne, Phyllis, Medea, and Penelope. Roberts notes the shared presence of these abandoned women in Ovid’s *Heroides*. Wroth’s exact means of access to the *Heroides* is unclear, but they were influential on sixteenth and seventeenth century English poetry, and Dorolina’s poem is clearly shaped by some understanding of Ovid: like Ovid’s letter-writers, Dorolina begins by directly addressing her unconstant object of affection and referencing the letter she writes to him.

Wroth’s angle on the *Heroides* is particularly evident in comparison to early modern English texts that single out constant Penelope in particular as a mirror for female behavior. In *Penelopes Web*, published in 1587, Robert Greene denigrates the other women of the *Heroides* in favor of Penelope’s married constancy. An elaborate subtitle outlines the mirroring function of the text: *Wherein a Christall Myrrore of faemine perfection represents to the viewe of every one those vertues and graces, which more curiously beautifis the mynd of women, then eyther sumptuous Apparel, or Jewels of inestimable valew.*

In the narrative, Ismena, the youngest of

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37 Wroth, *The First Part of the Countess of Montgomery’s Urania*, 776.

38 I am unable to determine Wroth’s exact source. She could have had access to a complete English translation of the epistles—George Turberville published his translation in 1567, which did Ovid’s elegiac couplets into rhymed fourteener. Wroth might well have had access to a different translation, however, or even some version of the Latin: Dorolina’s two references to the verses as her “last peece” (I.iii.492) and the products of her “latest breath” (I.iii.492) echo the opening of Dido’s letter, which calls its contents her “ultima verba,” a description which Turberville omits. See Ovid, *The heroycall epistles of the learned poet Publius Ovidius Naso*, trans. Geoge Turberville (London: Henry Denham, 1567), from the British Library, accessed via *Early English Books Online*, May 5, 2020; 40; Ovid, *Heroides: Selected Epistles*, ed. Peter E. Knox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 61.

Penelope’s maids, discourses on love that is “not accompanied with vertue to perswade, but armed with the outward hew of beauty to constraine”:

Such was the love of Dido to Aeneas, that seeing the curious forme of the dissembling stranger, through too over hasty affection, did both ruinate herselfe and her Kingdome. Ariadna by crediting the sweete tales of Theseus, Medea of Jason, Phillis of Demophon, and infinite other, which entring into this passion runs headlong after endlesse repentance.\(^{40}\)

This love, Ismena says, is “meer lust and vanity: wheras true and perfect love hath his foundation upon vertue onely.”\(^{41}\) Ismena’s long speech goes uncontested by the other interlocutors, and Penelope concludes the conversation in agreement, “‘I cannot thinke…that there is any husband so bad, which the honest government of his wife may not in time reforme, especially if she keep those three speciall points that are requisite in every woman, Obedience, Chastity, and Silence.’”\(^{42}\) This trinity epitomizes the conservatism and “explicit anti-feminism” of Greene’s text, as Lori Humphrey Newcomb characterizes it.\(^{43}\) In Penelopes Web, Dido, Ariadne, Medea, and Phyllis are at fault for their superficial and reckless passions; Penelope is the single exemplar of female love and virtue out of Ovid’s letter-writers.

Peter Colse takes a similar stance in Penelopes Complaint: Or, A Mirrour for wanton Minions. Taken out of Homers Odissea, and written in English Verse, published in 1596.\(^{44}\) Colse writes in his dedication that “Perusing…a Greeke Author, entituled Odyssea (written by Homer

\(^{40}\) Greene, 8.
\(^{41}\) Greene, 8.
\(^{42}\) Greene, 10.
prince of Greeke poets) noting therein, the chast life of the Ladie Penelope (in the twentie year absence of hir loving lord Ulysses) I counterfeited a discourse, in English verses, terming it her Complaint.” Although Colse claims for his source material the more prestigious Odyssey, the complaint unmistakably draws from the Heroides as well. It opens with a list of names familiar from Dorolina’s poem:

Let foolish Phillis cease to faint,
And for Demophoon leave to mourne:
Let Dido finish her complaint,
And faithlesse false Aeneas scorne:
For carelesse wights why do you care,
And causelesse eke so wofull are?

Later in her complaint, Penelope also “controlleth Hellen for her ill example” and, in a tirade against Paris, cites his abandonment of Oenone among the number of his treacheries. Colse shows his Ovidian debt in this grouping of Phyllis, Dido, Helen, Oenone, and Penelope, all authors of letters in the Heroides. Among these women, however, Colse frames only Penelope in terms of positive virtue. Helen is an adulteress, and Phyllis, Dido, and Oenone “causelessly” mourn the end of their relationships with flawed men. If Penelope is a “Mirrour for wanton minions,” those “wanton minions” are English women and wives who would follow the model of Helen or Phyllis rather than Penelope.

In these ways, Colse and Greene write Penelope as a mirror of conservative values of obedience, chastity, and silence; Ovid’s other women are anti-examples only referenced in passing. Although Dorolina singles out Penelope for her special degree of constancy, she fashions mirrors out of all five women she names as patterns of true and constant loving. In

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45 Colse, A2.
46 Colse, 1r.
47 Colse, 3r-v.
Dorolina’s reading, for example, Ariadne was wronged by “false Prince Theseus,” who “flying, left her crost / With his abandoning her truth, and love / Leaving her desolate” (I.iii.493). Theseus is at fault for abandoning, not Ariadne for loving. “I Ariadne am alike oppress’d / Alike deserving, and alike distress’d” (I.iii.493), the poem continues; Dorolina is as-yet unnamed, bringing out a double reading of the line as “I, Ariadne, am alike oppressed” in addition to “I am oppressed alike to Ariadne.” Each letter-writer’s narrative reflects some aspect of Dorolina’s experience, and therefore all of the women are potential mirrors or models for future behavior.

At this point, a reader might expect Dorolina to follow one of her “Examples”—either committing suicide like Dido or Phyllis, or patiently waiting for her lover’s return like Penelope. Instead, Dorolina resolves to offer her service to Pamphilia, whom she had previously served and attended. This decision does not follow the pattern of any of the women of the Heroides, and it causes her to reckon with her errors:

Now she could discerne her errour, but how? as if she lookt into a glasse, and behinde her saw her miserie, which to her face abusd her: so her passed time had wrong’d her, never to be righted or cleered, if not by death, forgiveness, or charity. (I.iii.495)

Dorolina turns away from her Ovidian mirrors only to look into this other mirror. The image is similar to “Stephen Batman’s 1569 woodcut of a woman adjusting her headdress with the aid of a mirror, oblivious to the devil lurking at her back…titled simply Of Pride,” which Shuger specifically cites as an example of the pattern that “when mirrors are used to view one’s own face, they almost invariably signify vanity or related vices.” But Wroth’s image is not emblematic: whereas in Batman’s woodcut, the lady sees a devil that connotes pride, what Dorolina sees reflected is “her miserie,” or “her passed time” (I.iii.495). Just as her epistolary

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48 Shuger, 31.
poem had reflected “Examples” (I.iii.493) of her distress, the mirror reflects her narrative of 
abandoned love—but this is finally a specific narrative, not a typified one. With Pamphilia, 
Wroth writes, Dorolina lives in a way “more acceptable, because neerest agreeing with her 
passions, and miseries, as she calld them, and indeed were, for none can be compared to forsaken 
love” (I.iii.495). In rejecting an Ovidian ending, the lady identifies her own particular “miseries, 
as she calld them” (I.iii.495), rather than identifying with Dido, Ariadne, Phyllis, Medea, and 
Penelope all at once.

With the report of her reception back into Pamphilia’s service, the romance moves on, 
and Dorolina’s plot thread seems to have come to a close. But after a couple of very brief 
diversions, the romance returns to the as-yet unnamed lady, finally naming and identifying her:

Pamphilia, not hoping for any redresse, was one day in certaine walkes with her 
ancient friend, and servant the Lady, who the Queenes met in such disorder for 
love, and was the same Lady that was so pleasant with Steriamus when he was 
passionate for Pamphilia, she was called Dorolina, then who there was not a 
discreeter, though a true lover. (I.iii.498)

It is as though, by turning away her Ovidian mirrors, the lady finds her individual identity 
not as Ariadne (or Dido, Phyllis, Medea, or Penelope), but as Dorolina. In naming her, Wroth 
also creates a history for her that unites the disparate appearances of this previously anonymous 
character. When Wroth refers to “the same Lady that was so pleasant with Steriamus” (I.iii.498), 
she means a lady “who did much use to accompany the Princesse (though she be of the Queenes 
Chamber)” (I.i.68) who stands by Pamphilia in the gallery window immediately before the glass 
discovery. What links Dorolina’s widely dispersed appearances, then, are mirrors and 
mirror-texts. In her first appearance close to the beginning of Book I, it is Steriamus’s mirror;
when she resurfaces towards the end of Book III, it is her Ovidian poem and the “glasse” in which she sees her “miserie” (I.iii.495).

And in this final appearance at the end of Book III, it is another mirror-text. Dorolina attempts to get Pamphilia to recite some of her poetry, but she refuses and instead “told her this tale, faigning it to be written in a French Story” (I.iii.499). It is the story of Lindamira—another version of the narrative that Pamphilia had read and thrown away in the mirror-book, and that she had heard in Limena’s story of Alena. Pamphilia’s story of Lindamira has received substantial critical attention for its similarity to Wroth’s own biography. For my purposes, however, I am more interested in parsing Dorolina’s reaction than in the specific biographical resonances of the tale. Her reaction is partly what cues to the reader the story’s topicality: once Pamphilia has finished reciting the poems she made of Lindamira’s complaint, “Dorolina admired these Sonnets, and the story, which she thought was some thing more exactly related then a fixion, yet her discretion taught her to be no Inquisitor, so home againe they went” (I.iii.505). Dorolina’s past encounters with mirrors have made her an ideal recipient of this story: her turning away of mirrors makes her a “discreet” lover, a virtue for which Wroth praises her when she finally gives her the name Dorolina. She is able to understand the correspondences between her life and the lives of Ovid’s letter-writers, but she is also able to maintain the integrity and privacy of her individual narrative. In a similar way, she understands a correspondence between Pamphilia’s life and the story of Lindamira, but she discreetly refrains from turning the mirror back onto her.

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49 See Wroth, The First Part of the Countess of Montgomery’s Urania, lxix.
Like the other romance texts I explored in this chapter, the *Urania* has multiple kinds of mirrors. When they appear as objects, vain women look into them; when they appear as metaphors, viewers lose themselves in them. Wroth thus associates the mirror with superficiality and exteriority. But her mirror-texts work in yet another way. Similar to the *Mirror of Princely Deeds or Knighthood* or *The Faerie Queene*, the *Urania* ultimately does position itself as a mirror-text: it shares a plot with Pamphilia’s book, Limena’s mirror, and the story of Lindamira. The abundance of these stories makes the setting of the glass discovery—the gallery with “many [glasses] hanging as ornaments” (I.i.69)—a fitting image for the *Urania’s* duplication of the same narratives. As Wroth suggests through Pamphilia and Dorolina’s interactions with mirrors, however, and through the glass discovery in particular, the correct response to these mirrors is discretion or rejection. The *Urania* may be a mirror, but its ideal reader is someone who turns the mirror away.
CONCLUSION

Just as mirrors take different forms in Wroth’s *Urania*, mirrors were fluid objects in the decades before and after its publication. An inconsistency in translation illustrates the extent of this shift. The earliest English translations of Marguerite de Navarre’s *Heptaméron* translate only a selection of the tales, and they exclude Nouvelle 24 of the third day, Dagoucin’s tale of Elisor’s confession of love by way of mirror. The first English translation to include this tale is Robert Codrington’s, published in 1654. Codrington is generally conservative in his translation. The first sentence of the tale runs, in French, “En la maison du roy et royne de Castille, desquelz le nom ne sera dict, y avoit ung gentilhomme si parfaict en toute beaulté et bonnes conditions qu’il ne trouvoit poinct son pareil en toutes les Espaignes.”¹ Codrington renders it, “In the Court of the King and Queen of Castile (whose Names shall not be expressed) there was a Gentleman, so exquisit in his Complexion, and proportion of Body, and the sweetnesse of Condition, that in all Spain there was not an Equal to him.”² Although Codrington elaborates on “si parfaict en toute beaulté et bonnes conditions” with the more specific tricolon “exquisit in his Complexion, and proportion of Body, and the sweetness of Condition,” he otherwise keeps close to the French in his choice of words and his ordering of the sentence. The same is true throughout his translation—much of it is even more word-for-word than his translation of the first sentence.

So it is all the more striking when Codrington chooses to depart from Marguerite in a way that totally alters the substance of the text. Marguerite’s French describes Elisor’s mirror as “ung grant mirouer d’acier en façon d’un hallecret,” or “a great mirror of steel in the

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¹ Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptaméron*, 237.
fashion of a corselet.”

There is a clear association between shape and material in Elisor’s fashioning of a corselet-like mirror to place “devant son estoumach,” where the steel armor is naturally rounded and slightly convex in a manner suggestive of a steel glass mirror. Codrington, however, translates it as “a great Mirror of Christal in the fashion of a Corslet.”

Unlike a corselet or a steel glass mirror, a crystal glass mirror is completely flat, and it is backed by an alloy of quicksilver and tin rather than steel. Something had shifted in the century between 1558, when the Heptaméron first appeared in print, and 1654, when this translation was published, that led Codrington to modernize the mirror against both the meaning and the logic of the text.

Wroth’s Urania, situated partway between these two texts, is likewise situated partway between the ascendancy of the steel glass mirror and of the crystal glass mirror. This middle placement posed some challenges in working on this topic. When I began my research, I had hoped to draw heavily from Rayna Kalas’s materialist approach to mirrors in Renaissance English poetry, which suggests that “the key question in understanding the Renaissance mirror is not how the mirror as an object led to the formation of the subject, but rather how the mirror as an object informs the mirror as a metaphor.” Her analysis focuses on texts such as George Gascoigne’s The Steele Glas, whose conceit is precisely the material distinction between the steel glass mirror and the crystal glass mirror: the steel glass, made entirely of alloyed metal, produces an imperfect image and requires polishing, whereas the crystal glass, a newer technological innovation made of light, thin glass, produces a clearer image without any need for

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3 Marguerite de Navarre, Heptaméron, 238.
4 Marguerite de Navarre, Heptameron, trans. Codrington, 222.
5 Kalas, 108.
6 Kalas, 111.
maintenance. Gascoigne draws a parallel moral distinction between the virtuous attentions needed to maintain the steel glass and the degeneracy represented by the effortlessly bright crystal glass. Wroth is less interested in the materiality of her mirrors, and she never specifies as clearly as Gascoigne which kind she means from mirror to mirror. Some of the Urania’s mirrors seem to be steel glasses. The abundance of mirror-metaphors related to eyes—a comparison suggested by their shared convex shape and opacity of reflection—indicates that the steel glass mirror is still a major presence in Wroth’s poetic imagination. Others of the mirrors seem to be crystal glasses. The lady who has “businesse…perpetually in her selfe, and with her selfe, the looking-glasse being most beholding to her for stay” (I.iii.403), for example, likely has a crystal glass pocket mirror, a luxury item “frequently worn tied to the waist,” as her perpetual use of it would suggest. While these passages give enough context to guess at the kind of mirror in use, other passages leave it ambiguous. The mirror in Steriamus’s glass discovery, for example, could be either kind—both have a dull side, which is the only material detail Steriamus gives about it. The mirrors of the Urania are not only unstable in meaning, but also unstable in form, appearing as both steel glass mirrors and crystal glass mirrors.

This ambiguity has limited the extent of some of my analysis. As Kalas writes, her approach to analyzing the ways in which the mirror as an object informs the mirror as a metaphor “requires a shift in focus away from the subject-object relation and toward the relation of matter and meaning.” Wroth defines subject and object more clearly than matter and metaphor, and so my reading pursued that angle. I do think that much is left to be said about the

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7 Kalas, 107-108.
8 Kalas, 108.
9 Kalas, 111.
materiality of mirrors in the *Urania*, however. Glass appears in other passages with more material force: Wroth, describing Leandrus’s unsuccessful love for Pamphilia, writes that “Cruell it was to understand her affection was else-where placed, yet sometimes would hee flatter himselfe, and give his fawning hopes leave to dissembly, and cast a glasse of comfort on him, but glasse-like was it brittle, although faire, faire in hope, broken to dispaire” (I.ii.215). Leandrus’s mirror is explicitly another flattering glass, but the metaphor works more by the mirror’s materiality—the essential points of the metaphor are that the glass is “brittle” and “faire”—than by its relationship to the viewer, Leandrus. Taking apart Wroth’s other mirror-metaphors into their material components would require a different set of questions than the ones I have posed in the past chapters. By 1621, what kind of mirror was predominantly used for looking at oneself? What kind of mirror was hung in the galleries of Jacobean households? What kinds of mirrors would Wroth in particular have had around her?

This kind of research would dovetail well with an exploration of the scientific glasses of the *Urania*, a chapter I had planned on including in this thesis before the outbreak of Covid-19 disrupted my researching and writing. This chapter would have centered on passages that incorporate new scientific vocabulary technologies into the romance’s metaphorical language. This area of science was rapidly developing at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Devices resembling telescopes might have existed in Europe as early as the sixteenth century, but the earliest hard date for the invention of the telescope is 1608, when Hans Lippershey, a Dutch spectacle-maker, applied for a patent for an “instrument for seeing at a distance.”  

Galileo learned of the telescope in Venice in 1609, and the next year he published his *Sidereus nuncius*

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to describe the astronomical discoveries he had made by means of the instrument. The technology was thus young and developing as Wroth was writing the *Urania*, and it worked its way into the language of the romance. Wroth describes the “proud, insolent” (I.ii.305) Queen of Epirus, related to one of the five kings of divided Albania. Selarinus, the rightful heir to the Albanian throne, requests passage through Epirus for his forces, but she denied passage for the Armies, having so much foolish pride about her, as she was blinded from knowledge, that those forces could passe with her losse of her Realme, if they pleased; but she, who saw but as through a prospective glasse, brought all things neerer or farther, as shee pleas’d to turne the ends to her sight. (I.ii.305)

With its emphasis on pride, the description of the Queen of Epirus is reminiscent of Wroth’s vain, mirror-obsessed women. In this context, it would be unsurprising for the Queen of Epirus to flatter herself with a mirror, in actuality or in metaphor. But Wroth instead names the “prospective glass,” which Roberts glosses as an “optical instrument, such as a spy glass or telescope.” The metaphor is undeniably tied to the materiality of the telescope, which viewed through one side makes things appear closer, and viewed through the other side makes things appear farther away, just as Wroth describes. Yet in altering reality “as shee pleas’d to turne the ends to her sight,” the prospective glass has a flattering role—like other glasses used to view the face, it signifies vanity. Wroth thus synthesizes the inherited emblematic language of the mirror with the new materials of seventeenth century science.

The formal invention of the microscope followed that of the telescope by half a century, but microscope-like imagery also appears in Wroth’s writing. In one inset story, Elyna tries to

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12 Wroth, *The First Part of the Countess of Montgomery's Urania*, 752.
conceal her relationship with Peryneus, but “her Aunt discerned it, wearing quickly then glasse eyes to make every mote seem thousands, and so in a sollid body appeare beames to her mistrust” (I.iv.598). With its motes, eyes, and beams, the passage plays on Christ’s words at the Sermon on the Mount:

And why seest thou the mote, that is in thy brothers eye, and perceivest not the beame that is in thine owne eye: Or howe sayest thou to thy brother, suffer me to cast out the mote out of thine eye, and beholde a beame is in thine owne eye: Hypocrite, first cast out the beame out of thine owne eye, and then shalt thou see cleerely to cast out the mote out of thy brothers eye. (Matthew 7:4-6)

Elyna’s aunt wears “glass eyes” (I.iv.598), which seem to be magnifying lenses. These lenses technically do magnify, but Wroth expresses that effect in terms of multiplication: the mote in Elyna’s eye, under her aunt’s lens-enhanced gaze, appears to be thousands of motes that cohere into a “sollid body” (I.iv.598). The lens acts like a crystallized form of the hypocrisy that Christ targets in the Sermon on the Mount as it transforms “motes” into “beames” (I.iv.598). As with the flattering prospective glass, Wroth again synthesizes new scientific developments with more traditional forms and meanings. As with the prospective glass, too, the magnifying lenses fail to improve human sight. Both instead exacerbate their user’s flaws: the telescope the Queen of Epirus’s pride, and the lenses Elyna’s aunt’s hypocrisy.

Other new scientific vocabulary surfaces in unusual places. As Amphilanthus and Ollorandus are riding, they overhear a set of verses sung by a woman as she angles for fish. In the first verse, the lady—unnamed, but indexed by Roberts as the Angler Woman—addresses love: “Love peruse me, seeke, and finde / How each corner of my minde / is a twine / woven to shine” (I.ii.288). In the next, she addresses her beloved: “Deare behold me, you shall see / Faith the Hive, and love the Bee” (I.ii.288). Uniting these disparate images of weaving and bees is the
common request to “peruse” or “behold.” This request intensifies in the following verses as, still addressing her beloved, the Angler Woman sings:

Pray desect me, sinewes, vaines,
Hold, and loves life in those gaines;
   lying bare
   to despaire,
When you thus anotamise
All my body, my heart prise;
   being true
   just to you.
Close the Truncke, embalme the Chest,
Where your power still shall rest,
   joy entombe,
Loves just doome. (I.ii.289)

From perusing and beholding, the Angler Woman moves to dissecting and anatomizing, more active and disruptive forms of observation. These are also newly named forms of observation. “Anatomize” is a coinage of the sixteenth century; the Oxford English Dictionary dates its first usage to 1541, and its first figurative, poetic usage to 1588. “Dissect” is an even newer word, with its first recorded usage dating to 1608, and entering the poetic lexicon just as Wroth was writing the Urania—the Oxford English Dictionary cites a sermon by John Donne written some time before 1631 as the earliest example. This strain of scientific language brings others of Wroth’s images into new focus. She describes one woman married against her will, for example, as “suffering as patiently, as a dead body permits handling, by any rude standers by” (I.iv.632). In light of the Angler Woman’s song, it could be that the “dead body” of this metaphor is a scientific subject, and that the kind of rough “handling” Wroth means is not just embalming and entombing, but dissecting and anatomizing.

Although this vocabulary has apparently nothing to do with mirrors, the two are linked by their metaphorical function. “Anatomy,” coined at the same time as its verb form, worked its way into the titles of books. In his study of mirror-metaphors in titles of early modern English books, Herbert Grabes briefly turns to the anatomy: “the mirror as titular metaphor for the unmasking of concealed ills acquires in the late sixteenth century—at a time when the thematic range was being extended far beyond the topic of vanity—a serious rival in the Anatomy.”\textsuperscript{14} By the end of the sixteenth century, literary satire in particular had taken up “anatomy” either alongside or in place of “mirror.”\textsuperscript{15} Some romances adopted this new title-metaphor as well. To return to an example from my second chapter, the subtitle of Munday’s romance \textit{Palmerin d’Olivia, The mirrour of nobilitie, mappe of honor, anotamie of rare fortunes, heroycall president of Loue} shows the association and easy slippage between “mirror” and “anatomy” as title-metaphors. This link is relevant to the \textit{Urania} as well. In discussing the romance’s mirrors, I examined instances in which the gaze is active and aggressive—when, for example, Nereana couples her vow to “follow” and “win” Steriamus with a vow to “see” Pamphilia (I.ii.193), and how she looks at Pamphilia “like a rival, therefore spitefully” (I.ii.194). As the Angler Woman’s song suggests, dissecting and anatomizing are only intensified forms of perusing or beholding.

Analysis of the \textit{Urania} through its scientific metaphors could lead to a re-evaluation of its place in the chronology of romance, or Wroth’s place in the chronology of seventeenth-century literature as a whole. As Sarah Wall-Randell observes, “Although it comes after \textit{Don Quixote} chronologically, Wroth’s \textit{Urania} might initially be seen as a traditional or “straight” romance in


\textsuperscript{15} Grabes, 233.
contrast to Quixote’s sophisticated parody.”\(^{16}\) In a similar way, Ilona Bell writes that “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.”\(^{17}\) Both Wall-Randell and Bell argue against these first impressions of traditionalism or belatedness: Wall-Randell cites the *Urania*’s self-conscious exaggeration of romance forms and conventions as indication that Wroth is “both exploring and sending up the romance mode,”\(^{18}\) and Bell contends that Wroth’s sonnets and songs in fact challenge literary and social conventions in their treatment of Petrarchism, female desire, politics, and religion.\(^{19}\) Another strategy in thinking about the *Urania* as an of-the-moment contribution to the romance genre, then, could be an evaluation of its scientific language, which shows Wroth reacting to the developments of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century science. This approach would put Wroth in greater conversation with later authors such as Margaret Cavendish, who fuses natural philosophy with quasi-romance in works such as *The Description of a New World, called The Blazing World*, published in 1666.\(^{20}\)

As it is, this thesis has explored two sets of objects in the published *Urania*. The first set—cabinets, papers, and portraits—are at the heart of the romance’s depiction of interiority. I argue that, through sequences of writing, memorizing, and destroying verses, characters define

\(^{16}\) Wall-Randell, 117.
\(^{17}\) Wroth, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus in Manuscript and Print*, 11.
\(^{18}\) Wall-Randell, 118.
\(^{19}\) Wroth, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus in Manuscript and Print*, 11-19.
themselves through the private contents of their cabinets and memories. I read Pamphilia’s scene with Amphilanthus in her cabinet as a particularly rich illustration of selfhood defined through what is withheld: her verses, remnants of papers she destroyed, and her portrait, enigmatic in its symbolism, both motion towards deeper recesses of meaning within the concentric enclosures of cabinet and mind. Within the cabinet, the subject is stable and self-controlled. In my second chapter, I argue that the mirror has an opposite effect on the subject. Nereana and Celina, for example, both lose themselves in gazing at other women—Nereana adopts her rival Pamphilia’s subject-position, and Celina assumes her friend Rossalea’s feelings of love along with the outward shows—and both losses are charted by metaphors of mirrors. I then look at how Wroth reconciles the functions of these two sets of objects when they are brought together through the early modern title-metaphor of the mirror. In my reading, Wroth’s mirror-texts embody the threats of loss of control and loss of self, but she provides a model of reading and rejection that allows her characters to reassert their subjectivity in opposition to the objects of the mirror-texts.
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