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The “myth of Judith Shakespeare,” or the belief that women in the early modern period did not write, persists even in today’s scholarship and in anthologies that, if they do include early modern female authors, regard these women as anomalies. Lady Mary Wroth, author of an entire sonnet sequence, a play, and a complete prose romance, is one example of a woman writer who, despite her considerable literary output, has nevertheless been labeled by some scholars as a silent female author of the private realm, creatively stifled by her culture, and afraid of publication. I argue instead that Wroth should be considered a public author who actively participated within her literary community and circulated her texts among others. To make this claim, I evaluate her sonnet sequence *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* through the lens of her miscarriage trope, a highly unusual poetic figuration in the early modern period when miscarriages were scarcely mentioned in literature. By analyzing Wroth’s miscarriage trope, we may observe a number of rhetorical and thematic similarities between Wroth’s poetry and other works from the Sidney literary circle, of which Wroth was a member. As both a product of and a departure from the literature of her contemporaries, Wroth’s miscarriage trope demonstrates her public dialogue with others. Secondly, the miscarriage trope reveals that Wroth is indebted to the seventeenth-century elegy genre and especially maternal child loss poetry. Wroth’s borrowing from the elegiac genre also attests to her interaction with her community and most importantly allows her to prepare her manuscript for circulation using many of the same rhetorical strategies as mothers writing

about the deaths of their children. If Wroth can be read in such a way that at least partially erodes the perception of her as a private author, then it seems likely that other female writers of the early modern period might have desired publication as well. This thesis encourages a more nuanced approach to other seventeenth-century female authors and their texts that is not constrained by an antiquated view of literary history in the early modern period.

MISCARRIAGE, ELEGY, AND AN ALTERNATIVE READING OF LADY MARY
WROTH'S SONNETS AS PUBLIC DOCUMENTS

by

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The writing by female authors in seventeenth-century England is sometimes discounted for being overly private, familial, or pious – and yet they wrote.¹ Not only did they write, they circulated and published their texts in a manner similar to their male counterparts, a fact that challenges the perception of the early modern woman writer as unable or unwilling to write for a public audience.² Unarguably, the cultural barriers restricting a woman’s ability to write and publish freely were considerable, but as Lucinda Becker makes clear in her book *Death and the Early Modern Englishwoman*, “there were at least partial solutions” (190). What social conditions or life events inspired and enabled women in the seventeenth century to write? The experience of death often sparked female authors’ creativity and ultimately encouraged them to produce their own manuscripts. Within the context of loss, their texts were appropriate and more importantly, culturally acceptable. Becker’s study finds that “death provided perhaps the greatest opportunity for those women who wished to write not just for themselves, but also for others and . . . for posterity” (190). While largely excluded from overtly public acts of mourning or commemoration (Becker 141), the composition of

¹ As Margaret Ezell explains in her groundbreaking article “The Myth of Judith Shakespeare,” the *Norton Anthology of the Literature of Women* rejected including manuscripts in its collection, claiming that they were too private and amateur and therefore undeserving of being counted as canonical literature (587).

² Again, Ezell’s article explains that the lack of texts written by early modern women in many anthologies misleads readers to believe that women in the seventeenth century did not “write for an audience, if indeed they wrote at all” (580).

elegies for the deceased was considered private enough and in keeping with the societal expectation that women's "lament [should be confined] to the dimly lit reaches of the household" (Phillips 198). Women writers' exploitation of death and the elegiac form to write provides the foundation for the argument of this thesis.

Scholars have identified several subcategories of elegy such as the funeral elegy, critical elegy, or the proxy elegy (Murphy 77; Lilley 78). The diversity within the genre is suggestive of the great volume of elegies written during the early modern period and consequently, their popularity with the general public. Through the medium of the elegy, readers could revisit the best qualities of a beloved public figure such as John Donne or Katherine Philips, mourn in a communal setting rather than in isolation, and finally, remind themselves of the characteristics of an exemplary life (Murphy 75; Brady 6). Seventeenth-century elegies were a particularly formulaic poetic form, its tropes, structure, and content steeped in a long tradition of elegists from Greek and Roman literature (Murphy 76). The commonplaces and formal aspects of the elegy were deeply canonized having been "learned and enforced in the agonistic context of the early modern school" (Brady 1-2). Schoolboys were educated on the specific rhetoric of elegy and then asked to compose their own and eventually achieve mastery of the form through repeated practice (Murphy 77). Some elegists, however, expressed their discontent with the genre's expectation of strict adherence to its well-worn conventions. Elegies from the period typically exhibit a noticeable tension between the author's visceral emotions and the urge to write within the conventions of the genre ("Teares" 48). This thesis is primarily concerned with two specific aspects of the seventeenth-century elegy. I am

interested in the moments of revision and even departure from the standard models that inevitably occurred in spite of the overwhelming pressure to conform to and master the classical rhetoric of elegy. Not only a mark of poetic skill, the elegist's ability to "wrench elegies out of their generic shape" was an expression of individuality and autonomy as an author but also as a person in the seventeenth century (Brady 2). Finally, I would like to explore the elegy's intimate relationship with gender and the related notion of the difference between public and private, which are two topics of significant social concern in the early modern period. Consequently, my thesis will approach the elegiac genre as a lens that reflects some of the most relevant national concerns in the seventeenth century and a point of entry into these particularly thorny issues.

The distinct yet related tensions between public-private and masculine-feminine become even more pronounced in maternal elegies, or child loss elegies, written by women. Though women's elegies were "culturally sanctioned" (Shohet 433), these poems, and, indeed, any female-penned text, were "subject to male scrutiny, and potentially thereby open to male editing" (Becker 182). In this way, maternal elegy – what might be considered a wholly private mode of writing – was actually tinged with an inevitable degree of publicity as a result of the period's cultural climate.³ Even the nature of the act of writing about child loss contributed to the blurred line between the public and private domains. Becker explains that these poems "represent an externalizing

³ Elizabeth Clarke explains that maternal elegies and other texts written by mothers in response to child death follow a "gendered pattern" typical of the seventeenth century (65). Men published their manuscripts; mothers wrote in spiritual journals "in discourses which can themselves constitute an act of silencing" (65). As I will discuss later in this thesis, however, maternal elegies challenged such a rigid distinction between masculine/feminine and public/private. The manuscripts that we have today survived because readers deemed them worthy of copying and preservation, which suggests that they were available to a public audience (Clarke 72).

of private sorrow into [the] public sphere” and thus are defined as public modes of mourning (141). When engaging in any analysis of the meaning of public and private in the early modern period, it is imperative to remember that “early seventeenth-century individuals had a perspective on public and private fundamentally different from our own” (Longfellow 333). In the early modern period, the boundary between public and private was tenuous and not so clearly defined, especially for women, whose lives were considered available for examination by the general community (Brady 15). The term “public” referred to that which was related to, or could have an impact on, the larger culture or society. Public matters were community matters, whether the community was defined as the nation-state or a single household (Longfellow 315; Brady 15). Conversely, the private sector represented a separation from the larger community and thus a lack of influence on it. Though I have offered only a summary of the complexities of the public versus private debate, I will revisit this topic at greater length when I begin to analyze Lady Mary Wroth’s poetry, the analytical focus of my thesis and a text that is explicitly concerned with the meaning of privacy.

In many ways, the title of Wroth’s sonnet sequence, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, is misleading. Writing from the vantage point of a lover addressing the beloved, Wroth does not identify Amphilanthus as male “until the forty-seventh lyric of the 1621 version of the sequence” (Kinney xxiii). Josephine Roberts adds that the delayed introduction of Amphilanthus as the object of Pamphilia’s affection “subordinates the role of the beloved” and provides a stark contrast to “male sonneteers who often lavished praise . . . upon the woman’s physical attributes” (48). Roberts, Kinney, and other scholars are right

to conclude that, because Wroth minimizes Amphilanthus' role in the sonnets, she is able to place "greater emphasis on the persona's internal struggles, as she comes to recognize the potential dangers inherent in romantic love" (Roberts 48). Pamphilia's dramatic turn inward, away from Amphilanthus and any other source of human companionship, has produced many critical analyses that interpret Wroth's sonnets as a commentary on female privacy and an example of the early modern female author who resisted making herself and her texts available to the public. My study of Wroth takes a different tack. Although I begin from an understanding that is shared by other critics of Wroth's poetry as more concerned with inner pain, I diverge from them by situating her sonnet sequence in the genre of seventeenth-century elegy, an approach that is unique among the existing scholarship on Wroth. Her poems do not classify as true elegies according to the standards the genre demands; however, the themes of grief, loss, and the conflict between silence and publication are foregrounded within Wroth's sonnet sequence, so it is possible to read her poetry as analogous to contemporary child loss elegies. By analyzing her poems in the broader context of seventeenth-century maternal elegy, we may identify Wroth as a poet who willingly participated in the public realm rather than reading her, as other scholars have, as an intensely private and withdrawn female author. The notions of public and private were deeply gendered in the seventeenth century, a cultural distinction that lingers today and is manifested in our "assumptions of the privacy, domesticity, and circumscription of women's poetry in the early modern period" (Lilley 81). Insofar as the myth of the silent female author still persists, it is necessary to continue Margaret Ezell's effort to uncover the female voices of the period and the authorizing strategies that

allowed them to speak within a culture that often devalued their words (Crawford and Gowing 2). Writing within the tradition of elegy and appropriating its commonplaces is one of the primary authorizing strategies that Wroth used in order to establish her poetry and her identity as female author as fit for public circulation. This analysis of Wroth reveals an alternative interpretation of her poetry as well as a potential strategy for reading other seventeenth-century female writers who also used the generic conventions of elegy to speak to the public.

I begin the next chapter by providing an overview of seventeenth-century elegy with a particular emphasis on the commonplaces or tropes that marked this highly conventional, formulaic style of poetry (“Teares” 48). Knowing the standards of the genre will make it easier to detect the moments when female authors altered or even disregarded literary and cultural expectations surrounding the elegiac form. My discussion will proceed to describe one subset of elegy, the maternal elegy about child loss, which is most relevant to the last chapter of this thesis on Wroth’s sonnets. Here, it will be especially important to attend to the instances of resistance to the elegiac form because they “signal [the writer’s] disposition and . . . impulse . . . to self-determination” (Brady 4). By evaluating how female elegists departed from the rigid poetic conventions of the time, we enable a reading of their elegies as unique expressions of grief, identity, and authorship that challenges the assumption that early modern women authors were unable to exercise creative control over their manuscripts. Though Wroth wrote neither maternal elegies nor elegies in general, her contemporaries and literary mentors Ben Jonson, Katherine Philips, and Mary and Robert Sidney (Wroth’s aunt and father,

respectively) did, so a brief mention of these authors in the second chapter will prepare my later analysis regarding the extent to which Wroth was familiar with the elegiac tradition through her literary lineage and borrowed from its conventions. My extended commentary of Wroth's poetry in chapter three will frequently refer back to the earlier discussion of Jonson, Philips, and Sidney in order to show the rhetorical parallels among their texts. It is my belief that Wroth explicitly drew from these authors' elegies in ways that strategically develop her authorial persona and prove that she was a publicly conscious author.

My thesis also seeks to extend Lucinda Becker's study by focusing on early modern women's relationship to miscarriage and the resultant portrayals of this unique experience of death within poetry. I will analyze a selection of Wroth's sonnets that include her miscarriage trope, a rare literary figure in the seventeenth century, to demonstrate its function as an authorizing strategy. Wroth and her manuscript gain public relevance through the miscarriage trope as it reveals her interactions with the well-known and well-respected Sidney family. The deliberate and repeated use of the miscarriage trope as an authorizing strategy confirms Wroth's status as an early modern female author who wrote for and within the public sphere. I will conclude my study of Wroth's poetry by suggesting some of the broader implications of placing early modern women writers in the unexpected framework of elegy. Situating Wroth's Elizabethan sonnet sequence in a radically different genre presents a new approach to understanding seventeenth-century female authors that reemphasizes the value of reading these women

in a way that mirrors their own innovative use of genre to ultimately transcend its seemingly inflexible boundaries.

CHAPTER II

ELEGY

Elegy allowed both men and women in the seventeenth century to release “their utterances of private anguish into public works of mourning” (Howard 198). That both genders wrote elegies to work through the experience of loss suggests their cultural value and broader literary significance in the period. Moreover, these poems, often written about known and well-respected public figures, were considered “physical goods” in addition to texts (Brady 6), a material product from an artisan that could be consumed by the general public. As a commodity, the elegy gained its highest value in the social sphere where it became a medium that exposed its readers to the ethical and moral virtues of the recently deceased, and ultimately encouraged them to lead equally exemplary civic lives (Brady 13-4). The elegy’s effectiveness in persuading readers to model their lives after the dead subject was contingent upon the perceived reliability and trustworthiness of the elegist himself or herself (Brady 14-5). Therefore, readers could very likely encounter within a single elegy a wide range of virtues that were not necessarily associated with the subject of praise. By helping to maintain and reinforce the standard conduct for men and women in the seventeenth century, the elegy – already institutionalized within the school system – exercised considerable societal influence to the extent that it communicated the benefits of living an ethical life and the proper modes of grieving. The seventeenth-century’s “culture of grief . . . mandated that public demonstrations of sorrow be suitably

stoic, while immoderation, if permitted at all, was confined to the privacy of the household” (Phillippy 202). For female elegists, the ability to demonstrate restraint during periods of mourning was of even greater importance in light of the general concern that women were inclined toward irrational, uncontrollable displays of emotion (Becker 138). Overall, elegies from the period, whether written by a man or woman, are marked by the author’s conscious attempt to contain his or her grief or, at the very least, an awareness of the elegiac convention that prescribed such behavior.

A measured approach to grief is one example of the many commonplaces or tropes that shaped the composition of elegies in the seventeenth century. As noted in the introduction, elegists were expected to follow the guidelines taught in school, guidelines that governed “the occasion, scope, tone, general outline of sections, and *topoi* of such poetry” (Murphy 77). As a result of elegists’ “shared . . . language . . . and literary materials” (Brady 1-2), a set of distinctive generic characteristics emerges. For example, the elegy may be divided into roughly three parts: praise, lament, and consolation (Murphy 77; Brady 10). Mary Sidney’s elegy for her brother, “To the Angell spirit of the most excellent Sir Philip Sidney,” displays her knowledge of and adherence to the traditional structure. The first stanza implicitly honors Philip as a great poet through her invocation of his “divine” spirit as the literary muse that will guide the creation of her own inferior poem (6). Her expression of “woe” (44) that issues from her broken “hart” (46) for Philip’s untimely death is reconciled toward the end of the poem when she finds solace in the knowledge that her brother and his “ever praised name” now resides in Heaven (77). At the same time that seventeenth-century elegies generally followed the

tripartite structure that culminated in consolation, W. Scott Howard observes a rhetorical shift during this period that produced several distinct changes to the genre including a greater “psychological response of grief and the mourning process [and] intratextual elegiac resistance” (217). The author’s resistance against consolation for one’s loss is also mentioned by scholars such as Andrea Brady and Patricia Phillipy who note that elegiac resistance is particularly common in maternal elegies of child loss. Katherine Philips’ elegy for her son Hector exemplifies this sentiment when she concludes her poem by continuing to “grieve [her] loss . . . And let the unconcerned World alone, / Who neither will, nor can refreshment give” (14-6). Here, Philips refuses to allow herself to be “refresh[ed],” believing that she will always feel sorrow for her child’s death. Such resistance to being consoled is likely related to many elegists’ disbelief in the possibility that the dead subject could ever be restored to a physical state (Lilley 87). By denying hope, the mourner could safeguard himself or herself against the disappointment that inevitably follows the unrealistic expectation of the resurrection of the deceased’s body. The poem by Philips and others like hers effectively protest against the strict outline imposed upon shows of mourning and demonstrate that the generic conventions were often amended to suit one’s literary and personal ends.

Another characteristic of seventeenth-century elegy is the presence of rhyme and regular rhythm of the poetry, which were considered proof of the author’s emotional strength. According to Brady, most elegies from the period “were written in rhyming couplets” such as Mary Carey’s and Ben Jonson’s elegies for their deceased children (12). While not every elegist wrote in rhyming couplets, a general “obedience to metrical

discipline” signaled the author’s belief that “prosody, whose principles were traditionally allied to ethics . . . could guard against an inundation of passion” for one’s loss (Brady 176-7). Elegists believed that rhyme so effectively countered the potentially overwhelming emotion of grief on account of its predictability and sense of poetic closure (Brady 177). In the context of seventeenth-century grief culture that demanded composure and condemned public displays of emotion, the use of rhyme in elegies was a means of communicating a poet’s conformity to society’s pervading ethical principles. Finally, because of the belief that the “profoundest sorrows cannot be spoken,” the “elegiac convention which protests against the visibility of sincere feelings” is also present in many elegies of the period (Brady 212). The poet consequently “turns inward, withdrawing into the body’s hidden recesses as the location of truth” (Brady 212). This move to keep one’s emotions private allowed the elegist to “engage in intense self-examination [in order to] ensur[e] that *this* grief is the *right* grief” (Brady 43), an act of reflection that was expected of mourners in the seventeenth century.

For instance, Mary Sidney demonstrates her conformity to this particular social norm in “To the Angell spirit” when she responds to her feelings of “woe” by “calling [back her] thoughts” to inquire into the cause and nature of such “strange passions” (44-5). She engages in a period of reflection in order to understand “how workes my hart” and why her “sences [were] striken dumbe” (46). The objects of her meditation – passions, thoughts, heart, and senses – confirm that Sidney is more interested in her inner self rather than any material reality that is now devoid of her brother’s physical presence. Sidney’s other elegy, “The Doleful Lay of Clorinda,” expresses even more conviction

that emotional pain should be contained within one's self. After deciding that neither the "heavens" (7) nor other "men" are suitable sounding boards for her grief (13), Sidney's speaker resolves, "to myself will I my sorrow mourn" (18), thereby assuring that her grief will remain her affliction and hers alone. Significantly, by restricting knowledge of her "inward pain" (3) to herself and the inanimate "woods, the hills, [and] the rivers" (22), the speaker effectively precludes the possibility that a public audience would be able to judge her based on the volume of her grieving. The stakes of suppressing one's emotions following a loss were high: excessive, false, and therefore impious mourning was believed to incur divine punishment not only for the individual but also the entire community (Brady 43). The tension between public and private that is so characteristic of the elegiac genre underlies Sidney's decision to contain her grief, as the poet's intimate acts of mourning, if conducted improperly, were considered weighty enough to impact the society at large.

An awareness of these commonplaces and conventions is essential to any informed study of elegy, and yet no elegy perfectly conforms to the rhetorical standards of the age; no poem exists that may be identified as the absolute paradigm of the genre. Paying attention to the moments when elegists break from these well-worn traditions is key to examining the poet's identity and, perhaps more importantly, his or her unique strategies for representing the emotion of grief, the grieving process in general, and what the author's strategies reveal about the historical circumstances under which the resulting text was produced. Despite being a subgenre of the elegy, the maternal elegy for child loss often diverges from the generic conventions that were explicitly and implicitly

required of the elegist. Furthermore, the maternal elegy claims its own set of commonplaces that reflect both author and her particular subject matter. These moments of difference call attention to the elegist's gender and how she both perceives and portrays herself as a female author of the seventeenth century.

Maternal Elegy

Any variation among elegies depends primarily on “the relationship between the elegist and her subject” (Brady 198). Mothers' poems for child loss certainly bear striking differences from other elegies in the period and are even dissimilar to male-authored elegies for their children. While only a woman could claim the experiences of pregnancy and childbirth, having “grown one ‘nature’ within them” (Brady 177), her experience of death in general was also unique. As Becker explains, women “were expected to tend the sick, wash and lay out the dead, pray at the deathbed, advise and support those facing death and manage a disrupted household in the wake of death” (138). Clearly, women's roles before, during, and after death were distinct from that of their male counterparts. More specifically, as these duties illustrate, a woman's experience of the death of another person occurred in the private realm of the household, while she was also restricted “by reason of [her] sex” to expressing her sorrow within the limits of the home (Becker 141). Seventeenth-century women's relationships to death were further distinguished from that of males in that only women could physically experience child loss through abortion or miscarriage. Becker writes that women “became intimately involved in death at the most fundamental level [because of] the high infant mortality rates of the Early Modern period

. . . the loss of offspring was a constant backdrop to the spiritual life of a woman, and could bring her into contact with death repeatedly” (34). This overtly gendered relationship to children and child loss is reflected in the mothers’ elegies, which only partly conform to the standards of the genre that were defined by its male authors (Long 254).

Though maternal elegy is distinct from other elegies of the period, it is true that mother’s elegies for their children “partially employ the genre’s characteristics” of the broader category of parental elegies (Long 254), namely the acceptance of loss as God’s will, the notion that God called back the child from the parents, and the pervasive belief that the child’s death was caused by parental sin and that the child represented a form of payment to God for any transgressions (Long 254; Schnell 488). Mary Carey’s elegy for her miscarried child, “Upon ye Sight of my abortive Birth,” exhibits all three of these commonplaces while highlighting their ubiquity in seventeenth-century parental elegies. The line, “I also joy, that God hath gain’d one more; / to Praise him in the heavens; then was before” (8-9), demonstrates a pious attitude that accepts and even delights in God’s desire to return the child to “the heavens” while Carey’s admission that “I am nought, have nought, can doe nought but sinne; / as my Experience saith, for I’ve ben in” (29-30) reveals how she interprets her repeated experience with child loss –Carey lost five children in infancy in addition to her one miscarriage—as a reflection of her sinful behavior. Carey’s elegy is clearly conventional at times, but it also bears evidence of substantial revision to the genre through the insertion of new commonplaces and thus illustrates women authors’ ability to productively manipulate the genre in order to

“enabl[e] an expression of grief beyond what the culture deemed appropriate” (Long 255). An analysis of poems by Carey and Katherine Philips will expose many of the conventions and characteristics typical of maternal elegies.

One common trope of maternal elegy is the use of ecological imagery to describe the dead child. Grieving mother elegists often compared the child to a “tender bud cropped by death or the marigold nipped before it can unfold its splendor” and themselves as a “branching tree” (“Teares” 40-1), which are all representative of the biological relationship between the mother and her offspring. Carey employs a variation of this analogy in her elegy when she likens herself to a “branch of the vine . . . a grouing tree” (35, 37) and describes her child as “dead frute” (20). Similarly, in her elegy “On the death of my first and dearest childe,” Philips depicts her deceased son as a “rose=bud” (6). Procreation metaphors were common devices in maternal elegies, yet the most striking and provocative commonplaces of this subgenre are those that concern the mother’s personal response to the loss of her child. One striking departure from the elegiac convention that mourners should contain their feelings of grief is the mother’s “refusal to mourn in the measure[, which] marks her writing as especially transgressive of the period’s orthodox approaches to grief” (Phillipy 142). Hardly stoic, maternal elegies exhibit deep anguish as the tension between expression and silence “comes unbidden . . . because the conventions of elegy . . . cannot contain [the mother’s] experience” (Long 258). This rebellion against the repression of the mourner’s grief is readily observed in Carey’s “Upon ye Sight of my abortive Birth” as she refuses to accept the loss of her child. In a particularly brazen moment, Carey challenges God’s divine “wisdome [and]

goodnesse” (4) when she demands that He explain “the reason why he tooke in hand his rodd” and felt compelled to punish her so severely by taking away her five children (17). Within the span of four lines in the middle of the elegy, Carey poses three questions directly to God that question his motives, a rhetorical move that blatantly disregards the seventeenth-century ideal of feminine submissiveness. The nature of her questions also challenges the widely held assumption that the child’s death was a product of the mother’s sinful nature. While Carey does acknowledge that her miscarriage is related to her own sins, her mention of God’s “rodd” suggests that she holds him equally accountable for her loss. Carey’s elegy is a powerful reminder that “not all grieving mothers were willing to submit to the prescriptive work of mourning that Protestantism and patriarchy demanded” (Schnell 495). By modifying the elegiac conventions, Carey signals her resistance to the dominant ideology about death and grief in the early modern period.

Like Carey, Philips issues her own challenge against the existing models of feminine grief by exposing them as unrealistic and impossible to emulate. In “On the death of my first and dearest childe,” she confesses that she can do nothing but “grieve [her] loss” (14) through “tears” and “piercing groans” (11-2). Her steady stream of tears and audible vocalization of grief, full of maternal lament, are poignant rejections of the cultural mandates that attempt to dictate her way of mourning. The elegy Philips writes for her son, which she declares will be the last poem she will ever write, presents an even more compelling argument against the unreasonable restrictions on feminine grief. Philips explains that her “Tears,” “sorrow” (11), and “groans *must* be thy Elogy” (12;

emphasis mine), a statement that conveys her belief that her emotional response to child loss is natural, inevitable, and thus cannot be controlled. The deliberate refusal to abide by the rules of feminine mourning as embodied in Carey's and Philips' child loss poems is one of the most profound revisions to the conventions of the elegiac genre.

Female elegists' awareness of the possibility that their grief, considered a "private affliction, not necessarily expressed to others" (Becker 140), might become public if their poems were to be published or circulated is another feature that distinguishes maternal child loss poetry as a subgenre of elegy. According to Phillipy, the female elegiac voice is "self-conscious [and] constructed" (214) and is therefore a performative act, in many regards. This is not to suggest that these mother-poets were disingenuous in their expressions of sorrow for the loss of their children; rather, female voices in seventeenth-century elegy were burdened by grief, but also by the "cultural desires and demands that insist upon feminine immoderation" and the hope of opposing this perception (Phillipy 214). Becker cites Katherine Philips' elegies as prime examples of poems written in a public-conscious voice: "Philips wrote elegiac poetry from the standpoint of private grief, yet with an awareness that her poetry might be published (as indeed it was) and thus her elegies would stand as public tribute to her lost son" (140). Philips concludes her poem "On the death of my first and dearest childe" by presenting her poem as an "Off'ring" (17) at her son's coffin with the certainty that this "Verse" would be her "last" (20). By abstaining from any future poetic exploits, Philips effectively silences herself, precluding herself from displaying irrational emotions as her sex was believed to do. At the poem's end, the reader is left with a speaker who

exemplifies “the cultural mandates of silence, chastity, and obedience [of] virtuous, Christian women” (Howard 222). In reality, however, Philips wrote and published more poetry after she wrote this elegy, which exposes the partial artifice of its final lines. Instead of marking Philips as an insincere poet, her (temporary) vow of silence underscores the degree to which Philips and other seventeenth-century female authors felt compelled to portray themselves as ideal women so that, if their words were circulated among the public, a pious image would attend their texts.

While Philips censors herself as a way to protect her chastity and avoid public scorn, Carey incorporates multiple Bible verses in her child loss elegy in order to prove her devout, orthodox character. The frequent allusions indicated in the poem’s margins draw the reader’s attention to Carey’s extensive knowledge of God’s word. That Carey glossed the poem herself advances the notion that early modern female elegists were acutely aware that their works were always vulnerable for public consumption, and that she wrote with that possibility in mind. In her study of child loss poetry, Elizabeth Clarke asserts that the voice of the seventeenth-century female author will always be marked by a masculine influence as a result of editing or other forms of control (85). Moreover, the main subjects of Carey’s elegy – pregnancy and miscarriage – were considered issues that belonged within the public realm. Laura Gowing’s book *Common Bodies* explores at length how the woman’s physical self became communal property in the early modern period. She writes, “The female body was a public affair, the target of official regulation, informal surveillance,” while pregnancy only attracted more public attention as it was a “way of defining women and gauging their status through appearance” (122). Failed

pregnancies like Carey's miscarriage were also public markers of womanhood, albeit of the flawed variety. Her use of biblical allusions to construct a feminine persona of "uncomplicated obedience" and "steadfast piety" aim to counter the public's opinion of Carey as a sinful mother, unsuited for the "natural" duty of childbearing, if ever her elegy were to circulate among (male) readers ("Teares" 44-5). Carey's notes in the margin, like Philips' oath of silence, are rhetorical strategies that reflect and indirectly comment upon the social reality of the seventeenth century that regarded the feminine body and the written word as texts perpetually available for public viewing and interpretation. Maternal elegies like Carey and Philips' therefore mourn the loss of children but also "the impossibility of any clear division between the private and the public" (Lilley 82). Female authors' recognition that their writing existed within the liminal space between public and private is clearly manifested in the nature of the poems' composition and is another feature of maternal elegy that separates it from its parent genre.

At the same time that seventeenth-century women wrote within and obeyed the conventions of the elegiac genre, they also subverted these restrictions of their voices and revealed that their will often opposed the cultural demands on their behavior. Incorporating at least some of the well-known elegiac commonplaces into their own poetry was essential for female writers to convince readers of their "mastery of antecedent models" that rivaled that of their male counterparts (Clarke xi); but they also revealed their rhetorical skill and intentions with the genre by manipulating the existing conventions or eliminating them entirely. The form of maternal elegy represents an especially distinct variation on the elegiac genre, which provided women an opportunity

to write during a time when they faced significant obstacles to do so. Not only did it allow them to mourn their children through “the potentially public medium of poetry” (Becker 141), but it provided an outlet for their discontent with a culture that portrayed them as emotionally unstable, especially during times of mourning (Phillippy 214). Overall, the experience of loss as described in maternal elegies became a rich occasion for female authors to write themselves onto the public stage as self-determined individuals who were not necessarily driven by their sex and other “matter[s] of the body” that were beyond their control (Phillippy 177). In the next chapter of my thesis, I will explore the connection between maternal child loss poetry and Lady Mary Wroth’s sonnet sequence, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, which was also largely concerned with the subject of loss. A comparison of the authorizing strategies of maternal elegists and Wroth will demonstrate the ways in which she borrowed from the genre as she worked toward preparing her writing for a public audience. Wroth, like many maternal elegists such as Carey and Philips, should be considered a public rather than private author because of her conscious attempts to shape an authorial persona that was acceptable according to the cultural standards of the time.

CHAPTER III
LADY MARY WROTH

In his seminal article, “‘Shall I turne blabb’: Circulation, Gender, and Subjectivity in Mary Wroth’s Sonnets,” Jeff Masten argues that Lady Mary Wroth’s poems “encode a withdrawal from circulation. The sonnets stage a movement which is relentlessly private” (69). Masten conflates the speaker Pamphilia’s refusal to circulate among lovers with Wroth’s retraction of her manuscripts after publishing her highly controversial prose romance *Urania* in order to read the sonnet sequence as an expression of female silence. Other scholars such as Wendy Wall, Gary Waller, and Josephine Roberts, the editor of the scholarly edition of Wroth’s texts, reiterate Masten’s portrait of Pamphilia as a private and internal speaker (Smith 409). Masten’s theory that Wroth censored her manuscripts from the public to avoid embarrassment proved similarly influential (Roberts 35). Overall, Masten’s analysis produces a “narrative of gendered suppression which has become the dominant critical approach to the sequence” (Smith 414). Provocative studies by scholars such as Daniel Juan Gil and Rosalind Smith directly challenge Masten’s assumptions by reevaluating both Pamphilia’s emotional commentary on her relationship with Amphilanthus and Wroth’s deployment of various authorizing strategies to conclude that Wroth, through Pamphilia, deliberately constructed her sonnets as public

documents.⁴ To Smith, for example, “Pamphilia’s withdrawal is performative and strategic . . . the sonnet sequence articulates oblique but powerful claims to personal agency and testifies to Wroth’s desire to participate in the public sphere” (Kinney xxviii-xxix). My analysis aims to contribute to these critics’ revised interpretation of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*. Like Gil and Smith, I read Wroth as participating within the public sphere rather than shying away from the gaze of others. Much attention has been paid to Wroth’s appropriation of Petrarchan discourse and her alignment with the aristocratic Sidney family as authorizing techniques, and, while these are important elements to consider when thinking of Wroth as a public author, I will analyze her use of miscarriage imagery as another form of poetic authority. Wroth’s miscarriage trope, appearing in her sonnet sequence as early as sonnet 4 and fully realized in sonnet 40, is a gendered, counterintuitive authorizing strategy that allows Wroth to portray herself as a public author by associating her poetry with contemporary child loss elegies circulating within her literary community.⁵ By placing Wroth’s sonnets within the context of seventeenth-century maternal child loss poetry, we may more confidently identify her as an author of the public realm.

Before I proceed to an analysis of Wroth’s sonnets, I must clearly define the parameters of my argument in two areas: first, I will define the terms “public” and “private” according to my interpretation and usage of them in this chapter; secondly, I

⁴ Smith challenges Josephine Roberts’ linear narrative that Wroth withdrew her manuscripts from circulation after they became a matter of public controversy. Smith argues that Roberts incorrectly manufactured this sequence of events after she misread Wroth’s letters, which use the “old style of dates” (410). Smith’s interpretation is tantalizing because it undermines a common perception of Wroth as a submissive female author who was easily intimidated by the slightest hint of public disapproval.

⁵ Sonnets are indicated by their number in the Folger manuscript of Wroth’s sonnet sequence.

will explain how the miscarriage, an event that could be considered a strictly private and personal experience, is actually representative of a public relationship with the wider community.

In determining the extent to which Wroth's poetry was available to a wide readership, I intend to evaluate Wroth's sonnets as public documents in the way that she would have understood them. Erica Longfellow's work to distinguish our modern-day dichotomy between public and private from an early modern viewpoint greatly informs my understanding of the two terms. The messy task of separating public from private becomes immediately apparent from Longfellow's assertion that "nearly all life—'had public, social, or communal dimensions' in early modern England" (318) and that occupation of private spaces did not prevent participation in the larger community – or preclude intrusion from the outside world. In other words, in early modern England, what was private could become public since even the concept of "private" connoted a sense of publicity. An appropriate definition, then, for such a fickle term is Longfellow's: "public," she notes, is "that which has national or community relevance" (315). This broad interpretation accommodates the numerous aspects of early modern life that would have been classified as public matters, which may not necessarily be considered public affairs today. I reject the notion that "public" in relation to a written text implies influence, popularity, or volume of distribution, especially during the seventeenth century when print still was a novelty. For example, Wroth produced just a few manuscripts for circulation among her contemporaries (Roberts ix). In contrast, I will use the term "private" in this thesis as the opposite of "public," indicating "secrecy or separation from

that which is open, available, or pertaining to the community or nation as a whole” (Longfellow 315). Having established a definition of “public” as an event of national or community relevance, I may now more clearly explain the public nature of miscarriage.

While early modern individuals held marital sexual activity to be an acceptably private experience, Longfellow notes that “marital privacy was open to debate and often worked more in theory than in practice” (324). Sexual relations accrued public interest beyond the couple “given the dependence of families and communities on healthy future generations” (Longfellow 324). One need only recall the repeated petitions for Elizabeth I to marry and bear a child to recognize how sexually private experiences seamlessly evolved into national concerns. The historian Linda Pollock confirms the public nature of childbirth-related matters, writing that “a baby of either sex would be welcome as testimony to the procreative potential of the union . . . because of the prevailing belief that a women’s pleasure during intercourse was essential to conception” (40). In early modern society, a child was a tangible symbol of a couple’s biological and emotional health and would be interpreted by the general public as such. Laura Gowing corroborates Pollock’s view of childbearing as a public rather than private experience when she explains that married women were required to make a “public acknowledgment of pregnancy and [go through] the rituals of display and interrogation that were required as the months passed” (123). The treatment of pregnant women during the seventeenth century is but one manifestation of the “habitual understanding of the female body as open and public” (Gowing 137).

It is clear that pregnancy, childbirth, and even the act of conception were regarded as public matters available for discussion among the wider community, yet the premature loss of a child could also be figured as public because of its direct impact on the longevity of the commonwealth. If pregnancy and the subsequent birth of a child guaranteed the perpetuation of families and by extension, the nation, then a miscarriage signified a loss or disintegration of communities. As we have already seen, one elegiac commonplace from the period cites parental sin as the root cause of a child's death. Some child loss poetry also represents dead children as a form of exchange or payment in which parents traded their child for God's only heir, Jesus Christ (Hammons 30). Christ's coming was only necessary, however, to redeem mankind from sin, so these poetic conventions indicate how a miscarriage was perceived as both confirmation and consequence of man's flawed internal nature. Since miscarriages pointed to individual moral defects, these tragic births, particularly if they occurred with great frequency, could cause unease among the public: miscarriages might be suggestive of flaws within the church, government, or other community institutions in the early modern period.

Whether on the state or community level, the miscarriage was a public event for the woman who endured it and the others who watched from a distance. In the remainder of this thesis, I will argue that Wroth's sonnets, like the miscarriage they describe, are equally public in signification precisely because they describe an issue that was often transferred into the public realm whether intentionally or against the parents' will. My argument for Wroth's poems to be considered public documents is based on two main components. First, I will demonstrate that the presence of miscarriage imagery in the

sonnet sequence reveals Wroth's extended engagement with the public through her interaction with other literature in circulation, particularly works by her father Robert and her uncle Philip Sidney. Wroth's miscarriage imagery is in part a modification of the procreation metaphor and other poetic conventions in Philip's sonnets as well as a symbol of affinity between Wroth's poetry and her father's verse. On both accounts, the miscarriage trope is a testament to Wroth's public involvement with her immediate literary community. Next, I will analyze the elegiac tendencies in Wroth's poetry that are also a reflection of her reading of contemporary texts within and outside of her coterie. Her appropriation of many commonplaces typical of the elegy and its subgenre, maternal child loss poetry, allows Wroth to establish an authorial persona that was appealing and marketable for a public readership. Prior to my formal analysis of Wroth's poetry, I will offer some historical background on miscarriages in the seventeenth century in order to situate Wroth's atypical use of miscarriage imagery in the appropriate medical and cultural context. By evaluating Wroth's miscarriage trope as an authorizing technique on multiple levels, we will continue to erode the image of her as a private author while also progressing toward a more nuanced understanding of seventeenth century literary culture. That is, women wrote, read widely, and adeptly manipulated traditionally masculine literary forms; they were not always silenced but wrote within and for the public realm.

Miscarriage

Pregnancy and childbirth in seventeenth-century England were perilous events for both mother and child. The advice literature of the time "operated from the premiss that

all pregnancies were potential miscarriages” and reflected mothers’ sense of imminent danger for their unborn child (Pollock 50). Michael Eshleman’s study on the link between diet and child loss in the seventeenth century adds that “the possibility of miscarriage appeared to influence nearly every facet of prenatal care” (37), and some mothers modified their behavior during pregnancy in the hopes of warding off potential miscarriages (Pollock 51). An expecting mother might have avoided strenuous exercise or tight clothing, confined herself to her room to seek refuge from loud noises (Anselment 16), or carried an aelite pebble with her, which was believed to prevent miscarriages (Pollock 51-2). Eshleman argues that women’s anxiety about miscarriage and their subsequent attempts to prevent them was understandable considering the high rate of abortive births during the seventeenth century. He places the miscarriage rate during 1609 to 1623 at about 44.6 miscarriages for every 1,000 births (38). Records of fetal death are sparse and therefore more unreliable compared to the medical records in the twenty-first century; however, the lack of documentation should not minimize the fact that the threat of miscarriage weighed heavily on the minds of pregnant women in the seventeenth century. In reality, the loss of the fetus was far more common than the risk of maternal death, another fear that plagued women at this time (Anselment 13).

Although miscarriage was a significant contributing factor to the high infant mortality rate during the seventeenth century and is mentioned in women’s personal papers such as Elizabeth Walker’s diary (“Teares” 34), the subject of child loss by miscarriage rarely appears in maternal elegies or in any other literature, for that matter. Mary Carey’s “Upon ye Sight of my abortive Birth” is the most popular example of a

maternal elegy written about miscarriage. However, except for Carey, “no other seventeenth-century woman appears to have written at any length about the experience[;] . . . miscarriage, much less poems about miscarriage, is not in fact a common literary subject until the second half of the twentieth century” in both America and England (Anselment 13). For one, early modern authors were not inclined to “address the human dimensions of . . . loss openly in literature” (Anselment 13). Additionally, the subject of motherhood in general was of little historical interest, which may be the product of the seventeenth-century’s distinction “between the ‘private’ world of women and children and the ‘public’ world of men” (Crawford 3). While some historians erected strict boundaries between what they believed to be the public and private sectors of society, I contend throughout this thesis that these worlds were not as mutually exclusive as they might have appeared in the literature of the day. An issue like miscarriage may be considered public if we do not assume that women’s issues are always aligned with the private sphere.

Lady Mary Wroth, writing about three decades prior to Carey, did not personally miscarry any of her children or compose elegies on the subject, yet images of miscarriage appear throughout her sonnet sequence, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*.⁶ In light of Anselment’s assessment that few early modern authors – men and women alike – wrote on the subject of miscarriage, Wroth’s poetry is noteworthy for this reason alone. A handful of her poems explicitly describe the experience of miscarriage, while several

⁶ Mary Wroth did suffer the early loss of her son in 1616, two years after he was born (Clark 269). Michael G. Brennan argues that Wroth had read Jonson’s elegies, “On My First Daughter” and “On my First Sonne,” after her own son died. Brennan implies that Wroth’s poetry bears the influence of her reading of Jonson’s poems and her own personal loss (351-3).

other sonnets marry the subject of loss with commonplaces from maternal child loss poetry; therefore, these poems may also be interpreted as allusions to miscarriage. Because of Wroth's repeated use of miscarriage imagery, her poetry bears thematic and rhetorical similarities to maternal child loss elegies written around the time Wroth penned her sonnets. The presence of multiple parallels between Wroth's poetry and elegies, specifically child loss elegy, substantiates my argument that Wroth borrowed from her contemporaries who wrote within the genre. Like her fellow female poets who modified elegiac conventions as a way to stake claims to individuality, Wroth also appropriated a number of commonplaces in order to achieve recognition as a public female author in the early modern period.

Though the field of obstetrics began to grow in the sixteenth century, by the seventeenth century, pregnant women still suffered from a relative dearth of knowledge related to the entire experience of maternity from conception to childbirth (Eshleman 23). Pregnancy was considered an illness, no test existed to determine if a woman was pregnant (Pollock 43), and "there was no concept of an abnormal pregnancy differing from a normal one and no routine ante-natal care designed to distinguish between these" (Pollock 49). The causes of miscarriage were particularly misunderstood. Early modern women believed that their morality – or lack thereof – was the reason for any premature child loss and that the dead child was a form of divine punishment (Brady 191). Mary Roberts' diary entry from 1661 makes plain this theory when she writes that after she lost her child, she "desired . . . to be humbled for all my sins which is the cause of miscarriage" (198). Another popular belief that a mother's sins could also result in a

“monstrous birth,” or a child born with a defect or deformity, was founded on the same assumption that the child’s physical wellbeing was directly correlated to the mother’s spiritual fitness (Gowing 129). Because of the nature of medical theory and practice in the seventeenth century, miscarriages and abnormal births could have been regarded as physical evidence of a woman’s sins such as pride, envy, or an errant imagination (Gowing 128-9; Brady 175).

The commonplace of maternal child loss poetry that blamed miscarriage on the mother’s moral failure appears in Wroth’s sonnet 85. In this poem, Wroth highlights Cupid’s natural innocence, writing that in his heart “sinn / Never did dwell” (5-6), at least until Venus transmitted her flaws to her son. As an adult, Cupid is more of a “monster” (13), but Wroth qualifies this description by explaining that all of Cupid’s “faults . . . in her [his mother Venus], did still begin” and thus blames Venus for imparting her own internal flaws to her son while he was in her womb (7). As I will argue, the poem’s allusion to miscarriage in conjunction with the pointed references to certain conventions of the Petrarchan mode indicates the public nature of Wroth’s manuscript. The miscarriage trope stands in direct contrast to the childbirth metaphor used by her uncle Philip Sidney to sanction his own sonnet sequence *Astrophil and Stella* and reveals Wroth to be writing with and often revising the poetic forms initiated by her literary forebears. Although this particular metaphor seems to be a counterintuitive and almost paradoxical form of poetic authority as compared to the childbirth metaphor, when Wroth’s miscarriage trope is placed within the larger context of the Sidney coterie, we

may understand this authorial device as the natural outcome of Wroth's public interaction with other manuscripts in circulation.

Scholars have already noted specific parallels between Wroth's sonnet sequence and the poetry of the Sidney family. For example, Wroth frequently uses compound epithets, a style associated with Philip Sidney, while her "Crowne of Sonnets," a subsequence within *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, is an imitation of her father Robert Sidney's own unfinished corona (Roberts 46-7). Wroth's unusual choice to write Petrarchan sonnets, a style which had long gone out of vogue by the time Wroth was writing in the early seventeenth century, is another clear sign that Wroth knew of the Elizabethan elements that marked her uncle's work and furthermore, that she desired to publicly announce herself as the heir of a well-known literary family (Roberts 41, 59).⁷ Wroth's repeated borrowing from the Sidney writers marks her sonnets as public documents that were in dialogue with her literary contemporaries in a highly social and communal manner. The "permeable [and] collaborative" seventeenth-century print culture in which Wroth composed must be acknowledged when conducting an analysis of her miscarriage imagery (Masten 68).⁸

In Philip Sidney's opening sonnet of *Astrophil and Stella*, the speaker Astrophil explains that his love for Stella made him "great with child to speak" (12), a metaphor

⁷ Scholars such as Roberts and Smith pay particular attention to Wroth's and other female poets' use of the Petrarchan sonnet form after the genre had fallen out of vogue in the 1590s (Smith 407). For Smith, Wroth's "unfashionable circulation of the sonnet sequence as late as 1621" arises from a desire to express nostalgia for Elizabeth I's rule and disillusionment with James I's (417).

⁸ Masten specifically denies that Wroth's sonnet sequence participated in manuscript circulation, though his description of this seventeenth century reading practice as "mobile, permeable" and "collaborative" is accurate and useful for this thesis (68). I, of course, argue that Wroth's manuscript was as permeable and mobile as the literary circles that dominated her literary landscape.

that equates an image of conception to poetic inspiration (Friedman 62). The childbirth metaphor, laden with associations to fecundity and procreation, was popular with male and female authors alike, appearing in Shakespeare's sonnets and in the work of Mary Shelley (Friedman 49). Far from being a gender "neutral" rhetorical device (Friedman 51), the childbirth trope is invariably located in the larger and more complex discourse of motherhood. In the hands of a female author, this metaphor becomes a challenge to the "binary system that conceived woman and writer, motherhood and authorhood . . . as mutually exclusive" (Friedman 65-6). While other seventeenth-century female writers like Katherine Philips formulated their positions of women authorship from the popular childbirth metaphor, Wroth opted to construct an alternative form of poetic authority based on death rather than life. Wroth's miscarriage trope, first appearing in sonnet 4, is a symbolic, public rejection of Sidney's metaphor of a pregnant mind. Rather than being "great with child," Wroth's speaker Pamphilia hopes that Cupid, "this childe for love . . . ought like monster borne / Bee . . . torne" from his mother Venus (13-4). The construction of the miscarriage as a statement of denial is an unexpected yet powerful authorizing strategy as it displays Wroth's literary knowledge, poetic ingenuity, and jurisdiction over her manuscript. According to Naomi Miller, "Wroth's explicit reconfigurations of lyric forms and strategies common to the sequences of Philip and Robert Sidney . . . indicate . . . her ongoing attempt to deconstruct the boundaries of her 'paternal' inheritance in order to fashion a voice of her own" (82). By beginning her sonnet sequence with a miscarriage instead of Philip's vision of childbirth, Wroth creates a contrast between her uncle's poetry and her own that would have been recognized by

members of her coterie, and, thus, highlights Wroth's active participation within her literary community.

While the use of miscarriage imagery initially appears to be an unconventional and even ineffective authorizing strategy, Wroth's decision to employ the miscarriage rather than childbirth metaphor is not so surprising in light of Susan Friedman's revelation of the latter's "deceptive nature" (64). She explains that the procreation trope in the pen of the male writer operates under the guise of idealizing the female's role as mother while "subtly help[ing] to perpetuate the confinement of women to procreation" (64). Procreation becomes gendered female while creation is elevated as a masculine act: "the *pregnant* body is necessarily female; the *pregnant* mind is the mental province of the genius, most frequently understood to be inherently masculine" (Friedman 52). The miscarriage trope operates on multiple levels for Wroth, allowing her to avoid the authorial limitations of Sidney's procreation metaphor while maintaining a thematic parallel and public association with his poetry. For example, Wroth's decision to forgo the childbirth metaphor liberates her from its "dangerous biologism" that suggests a women's life is predetermined by her womb (Friedman 51). The miscarriage trope still bears traces of motherhood to remind the reader of the Sidneain literary context of Wroth's poetry, yet the removal of childbirth from sonnet sequence negates the assumption that a woman must be in labor to be recognized as feminine.

In addition to revising Sidney's procreation metaphor, sonnet 85 also reveals Wroth to be amending the Court of Love tradition that draws a clear distinction between Venus, "the goddess of sensual love," and her son Cupid as presiding over true love

(Wroth 132). Wroth's appropriation of the Court of Love imagery, which echoes Elizabethan poetry and especially Sidney's sonnet sequence, functions like the miscarriage metaphor as both draw the reader's attention to Wroth's literary background and her engagement with the texts available to her. Interestingly, Wroth conflates the two tropes so that sonnet 85 contains a startling contrast between an image of maternity on the one hand and violent child loss on the other. The maternal relationship is extremely significant to the overarching themes of Wroth's poems, especially in comparison to Sidney's sonnet sequence, as she introduces the mother-son bond between Venus and Cupid in sonnet 1 and returns to it in later poems. Furthermore, whereas Wroth insists on qualifying Cupid as Venus' "sonne" in sonnet 1, Sidney does not mention either in his opening sonnet. Sidney's sonnet 20 is perhaps the more appropriate comparison to Wroth's sonnet 1 since both poems recount the moment when the lover is struck by Cupid's arrow. However, even in sonnet 20, Sidney not only resists identifying Cupid as anyone's son, but he elides Venus' presence altogether. The consequences of the maternal motif for Wroth's sonnet 85 and the entire sonnet sequence cannot be overlooked. By establishing the mother-son relationship of Venus and Cupid in sonnet 1 and reintroducing it in sonnet 85, Wroth enables herself to transform the Court of Love from an arena of romance into a site of inevitable pain.

Sonnet 85 explains how Cupid, already tainted by his mother's sin during the gestation period, becomes even more corrupted with "vice" as he drinks his mother's breast milk (10), believed in the seventeenth century to be capable of transmitting the mother's characteristics to the child (Sharp 196). The final lines of sonnet 85 highlight

the deleterious potential of this intimate contact between mother and child: by way of the breast milk, Cupid has become a “monster” who has been irreversibly infected with his mother’s sins (13). Wroth’s diction recalls advice manuals from the period that used the term “monstrous” to describe a child born with a defect or deformity (Gowing 128-9). Because Cupid’s nature has become so warped, Wroth concludes that the only recourse is for him to be “torne” from the “court of Love” in the same way that a miscarriage separates child from womb (13-4). Though Wroth explicitly mentions the Court of Love tradition from which she borrows, her rendering of it is hardly recognizable after she has couched it within the discourse of motherhood. Earlier, in sonnet 2, she explains that the court is “wher Loves force was borne” (4). In Wroth’s portrayal of the Court of Love that blends maternity with romantic love, the mother Venus’ court gives rise to “Love,” associated with Cupid, her progeny. When Wroth continues the Court of Love imagery in sonnet 85, we are meant to interpret Cupid’s forceful removal from the court as analogous to child loss, a void created through the transmission of parental sin from the court itself, here figured as Venus. Wroth’s manipulation of a trope that contemporary readers would have associated with Sidney and other Elizabethan sonneteers is yet another testament to Wroth’s status as a public author who readily engaged with her fellow writers.

Although he was an author of far less renown than her uncle Philip, Wroth’s father Robert Sidney nevertheless also had a profound impact on his daughter’s literary endeavors as evidenced by the similarity of their manuscripts. Quite literally, Wroth was in dialogue with her father’s verse when she wrote her *Crowne of Sonnets* of fourteen

poems, which many scholars have interpreted as a conclusion to her father's incomplete corona consisting of a mere four sonnets (Roberts 47-8). Wroth also maintained a thematic parallel with her father's poetry that is revealed through her use of miscarriage imagery. The correspondence between father's and daughter's poems is additional proof that Wroth participated with the texts circulating in her literary circle and sought inclusion within that particular community. In truth, Robert Sidney's poetry may be a closer match to Wroth's text than Philip Sidney's sonnets, even though many critics have produced detailed analyses of the relationship between Philip Sidney's and Wroth's Elizabethan sonnet sequences. As Josephine Roberts explains, "Sir Robert Sidney . . . uses a far different tone and imagery than is found in *Astrophil*" as even his love poems are full of a "dark, brooding hopelessness" (47). This observation also accurately characterizes the mood of Wroth's sonnet sequence. For example, Naomi Miller remarked in her essay "Rewriting Lyric Fictions" on *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* that "Wroth embraces the triple companionship of 'silence,' 'grief,' and 'Night'" throughout her sonnets (50), motifs that convey the sense of despair that overwhelms her poetry. Sonnet 5, the second in Wroth's sequence to mention miscarriage, also contains allusions to grief and night that perfectly complement the imagery of child loss. In the second stanza, Wroth displays her affinity for night by complaining that the "Sun most pleasing blinds the strongest eye / If too much look'd on, breaking the sights string" (5-6). The next stanza simultaneously introduces Wroth's miscarriage metaphor by way of the description of a dead flower bud in addition to the speaker's sorrow that Amphilanthus' "sweet lips nott loving doe as poison prove" (11). With his heartless eyes and lips,

Amphilanthus seems capable of giving Pamphilia nothing but heartbreak and a feeling of emptiness. The contrast of light versus dark and hope versus grief is more sharply outlined in sonnet 4, which also uses miscarriage imagery to set the stage for Wroth's commentary on the darker aspects of the human psyche. The poem opens with Pamphilia rejecting the "dark night" she has just experienced when she gradually begins to sense that her "joyes now budd againe" (1). Wroth's description of a "budd" that has been "kill[ed]" (3) at the "roote at heart" evoke the experience of a woman who recently experienced a miscarriage (3), which is the cause of her "bitter sobs, and paine" (5). The last line overturns the sonnet's initial despairing tone with the promise that "now backe the life comes where as once it grewe" as a new being has been conceived to fill the loss (14). In sonnets 4 and 5, Wroth's miscarriage trope introduces the notions of darkness, grief, and suffering that linked her verse with her father's and is consequently a measure of Wroth's engagement with the public.

If Wroth continues her father's precedent of somber poetry through her use of miscarriage imagery, she also reiterates his insistence on maintaining composure during periods of emotional strife. Robert Sidney concludes song 19 with the belief that "grief and anguish are the measure / that do immortalise our loves" (15-6). Implicit in these lines is the poet's attitude, arising from the cultural expectation of the time period, that the most meaningful and convincing displays of love are those that do not call attention to themselves but are instead silent and controlled. Certainly, Robert Sidney's use of "measure" in sonnet 19 may suggest a means of quantifying but also the act of disciplining one's emotions so as to avoid accusations of self-indulgence or worse –

insincerity (Long 255; Brady 69). The idea that true expressions of grief are achieved through self-reflection and critique is one of the primary themes of Wroth's sonnets and another demonstrable similarity that highlights her connections to the community and her status as a public author. This familial, literary relationship is apparent in sonnets 40 and 41 that contain Wroth's most explicit references to miscarriage in the entire sequence. In sonnet 40 for example, Wroth describes the physical experience of miscarriage with words such as "wombe" (3), "conceiving" (3), "blood" (12) and "unnaturall . . . birth" (2). The miscarriage trope in this poem is best described as an explanatory device that illustrates the affinity between a miscarriage and the "faulce hope" that Pamphilia has but later loses when her beloved proves unfaithful (1). Wroth continues the miscarriage imagery into sonnet 41, which is implied through the repetition of the word "blood" (3) from sonnet 40 as well as the references to "griefe" (2) and "paines" (4). Even in sonnet 41, Pamphilia remains "torment[ed]" by the premature loss of Amphilanthus' affections (5). Through the multiple allusions to miscarriage, Wroth effectively establishes Pamphilia's woeful mental state as an outcome of her recent loss. It is Pamphilia's management of grief, however, that so closely resonates with the theme of Robert Sidney's verse. Reiterating her father's sentiment in sonnet 19, Wroth's speaker shares her own conviction in sonnet 41 that "love can nott bee / Wher so small showe of passion is descri'd" (9-10) and then professes to never "make show of [her] love" (14). Father and daughter both seem wedded to the notion that silent suffering is the most proper expression of "sure love" (9). Robert Sidney's song 19 and Wroth's sonnet 41 is but one pairing that illustrates the textual likenesses that exist within this literary family. P.J.

Croft's appendix at the end of his collection of Robert Sidney's poetry includes 18 additional "echoes" that reveal Wroth's "debt" to her father's poetry (342). Through the lens of Wroth's miscarriage trope, readers may observe just one of many moments of engagement with her father's manuscript in an effort to achieve recognition as a public author within her literary community.

In regard to both form and content, Wroth's poetry is strikingly similar to her father's, and at times she seems to have unabashedly borrowed from his manuscript. Josephine Roberts was correct in her observation that Robert's rather than Philip's poetry most closely reflects the tone and overall theme of Wroth's sonnet sequence. Croft writes that Robert Sidney's work "define[s] a different view of love" as compared to Philip's vision in *Astrophil and Stella* (48), namely a cynical outlook "inspired by the beloved's betrayal of her lover" (54). Absence as one of the predominant themes of Robert Sidney's manuscript occurs as a result of betrayal, desertion, or unrequited love. Robert's speaker's experience of loss and grief is reflected in the references to darkness, night, and of course, through his generally despondent demeanor. Loss of the beloved is also the primary subject of Wroth's sonnet sequence, which is accentuated by her unique use of miscarriage imagery, while the management of the resulting grief is its main theme. Nona Fienberg observes Wroth's tendency throughout the sequence to resist "apotheosizing the beloved [and] celebrate an examination of a new subject, the female 'I'" (187). Previous scholars have already noted the unique status of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* as the only complete sonnet sequence to reverse the sexual roles and place the female in the position of the lover (Roberts 48). The persistent focus on Pamphilia rather than Amphilanthus'

attributes, and moreover, the attention to her internal character gesture toward Wroth's determination to shape a feminine authorial persona. The particular type of authorial persona that emerges from Wroth's sonnets, namely a woman in mourning who adheres to her culture's code of grief, is another strategy Wroth used to construct her manuscript as a public document. As a reflection of the author, Pamphilia's character casts Wroth in a positive light meant to appeal to readers both within and beyond her literary circle. To create her fictional counterpart, Wroth relied heavily on her readings of elegies and incorporated many of its conventions into her sonnet sequence.

Elegiac Tendencies

The miscarriage imagery in Wroth's sonnets derives from her participation within the Petrarchan and Court of Love traditions, but it is also a product of her awareness of elegiac poetry. The elegiac tendencies of the sonnet sequence evidenced by her incorporation of various commonplaces from the genre further substantiate my claim that Wroth was an active member in her literary community that included her aunt Mary Sidney. Wroth's poems, produced in large part because of her interactions with her community, are public documents suitable for circulation among and beyond Wroth's coterie.

The conventional elegiac metaphor comparing the loved one to an ephemeral flower, for instance, appears in both Mary Sidney's elegy for her brother Philip and in Wroth's sonnet 5. In "The Doleful Lay of Clorinda," Mary Sidney refers to her brother by his well-known pseudonym Astrophel, a dual allusion to Philip's own sonnet sequence

Astrophil and Stella as well as Edmund Spenser's collection of elegies for Philip entitled *Astrophel*.⁹ *Astrophel*, she claims, was the "fairest flow'r in [the] field that ever grew" (28), an analogy that she repeats five times in her poem. Mary Sidney extends the ecological metaphor when she describes her brother's death as a "cropp[ing of] the stalk" upon which he once stood (31). Wroth's sonnet sequence also contains several images of flowers, plants, and buds as she attempts to articulate her protagonist Pamphilia's experience with loss. Wroth associates flower buds with a lover's hope in sonnet U3 when Pamphilia accuses Amphilanthus of being the "instrument of [her] woe" (8) that "wrackt [her] young hopes in bud" (11). Alternatively, in sonnet U32, Wroth compares hope to a "vine of . . . grapes" (7) that have been utterly devastated because of the "despaire" in Pamphilia's heart over her failed relationship with Amphilanthus (7).

Wroth's use of flower imagery in sonnet 5, however, most clearly evokes the similarities between her poetry and maternal elegies of the period. Though Pamphilia issues a lament for Amphilanthus' "unkind" love (13), her language allows the reader to interpret her romantic heartbreak as a miscarriage of sorts whenever Amphilanthus' gestures of rejection "kill the bud [of love] befor the tree doth spring" (10). Like a miscarriage that terminates the child before it has fully matured, Amphilanthus' cold demeanor prevents Pamphilia's emotions from blooming into true love. As Wroth's

⁹ I am aware of the debate regarding the dubious authorship of "The Doleful Lay of Clorinda," in which Gary Waller and others attribute the poem to Mary Sidney while others claim it was written by Edmund Spenser (Coren 27). However, the true identity of the author is irrelevant for the purposes of my argument. Mary Wroth was an avid reader of both Mary Sidney and Edmund Spenser (Roberts 48). I am interested in the obvious parallels between Mary Wroth's miscarriage sonnets and "The Doleful Lay of Clorinda," similarities that exist regardless of the author of the latter poem. The presence of ecological imagery in both poems demonstrates Mary Wroth's indebtedness to other literature in her community that was not restricted to a particular author.

miscarriage trope, appearing in sonnet 5 and others, is developed from multiple literary sources, it is a means for readers to access the literary background from which she drew, demonstrating her public involvement with a large community of writers.

So far, this chapter has largely concerned itself with textual evidence that demonstrates Wroth was a public author insofar as she interacted with contemporary literature from the Sidney family coterie. It is essential to note, however, that Wroth's involvement with other manuscripts in circulation extended well beyond the limits of her Sidney relatives. An analysis of Wroth's miscarriage trope reveals that she was deeply entrenched within the genre of elegy that included but was not limited to her knowledge of Mary Sidney's and her father's own elegies. Wroth engaged with many authors outside of her family coterie as evidenced by the presence of many commonplaces of maternal child loss poetry in her sonnet sequence. The latter half of this chapter will focus on Wroth's use of four of these rhetorical conventions including the bereaved's resignation to God's will, the acceptance of loss, the emphasis on spiritual lessons rather than the physical reality of death, and the measured emotional response during the period of mourning. Wroth's integration of these highly interrelated commonplaces of maternal elegies into her sonnet sequence forms the crux of my argument in the remainder of this thesis. Her appropriation of these elegiac conventions and the subsequent construction of an emotionally stable persona does the most work in countering the perception of Wroth and her manuscript as private. Just as Katherine Philips and Mary Carey cultivated portraits of themselves as godly women in order to safeguard their texts against censure

were they ever to become public, Wroth also wrote her poetry under the assumption that it was a public document and prepared her writing for such a context.¹⁰

Wroth's decision to liberally borrow from a genre outside of the Petrarchan sonnet form should be prefaced by a few remarks on the cultural and literary value of the rhetoric of elegy in order to understand its great appeal to Wroth. All four of these commonplaces were public in many regards because if deployed effectively they could generate an authorial persona that aligned with the tacit regulations on modes of grieving dictated by the larger community. Though it seems contrary to consider tropes related to child mortality, which often appeared in private mediums such as spiritual journals, as public, Clarke reminds us that female-penned texts were often exploited for political purposes and that "even the most apparently private medium of the manuscript was no exception" (72). Clarke further argues, rather counterintuitively, that manuscripts that seemed the most private were more likely to be published if the author conveyed a character of "disinterested holiness [which was] a politically marketable commodity" (73). Therefore, originally private documents that recorded the maternal experience with child loss could transform into spiritual guidebooks for distribution among the general public if they portrayed acceptable female responses to death (Clarke 74). Even if a woman's manuscript was not reclaimed for circulation among readers, it would still likely bear evidence of public interference because of the "high stakes involved in women's writing about the deaths of children" (Clarke 79). The sensitive nature of this

¹⁰ It seems entirely plausible that Wroth would have wanted to create a virtuous authorial persona considering the circumstances of the 1621 copy text of her manuscript. Wroth "sent the Duke of Buckingham his own personal copy" with a carefully selected title page illustration that matched "the nature of her romance" (Roberts 70).

topic demanded that the female author actively censor herself in consideration of the most formidable critic, God himself. Religious pressure and a desire to present oneself as pious could prove to be an equally influential regulatory force over a women's manuscript as the possibility of circulation (Clarke 82). Whether the early modern female author wrote with the intent to avoid judgment from God or her readers, the incorporation of elegiac commonplaces into her text was an effective strategy for encouraging a favorable reception from her potential audience.

The accounts of mothers mourning the loss of their children and the subsequent circulation of these texts by virtue of their spiritual correctness provided early modern women writers a model for publication (Clarke 73). The cultural currency of child loss narratives is exposed in the seventeenth-century "publicity-conscious writer" Anne Halkett (Clarke 73), who offers a nice parallel to Wroth as both authors capitalized on the literary value of child loss rhetoric in their respective texts. According to Clarke, Halkett's autobiographical manuscript blends several elements from popular spiritual guides for grieving mothers in an attempt to invoke a flattering public image (75). Halkett's example establishes both the prevalence of authoritative child loss texts in the early modern period and the exploitation of morally admirable tropes by female writers to create a certain authorial persona, which could lead to manuscript circulation. A consideration of Wroth's miscarriage imagery as well as Pamphilia's strained relationship with Amphilanthus within the literary practices of seventeenth-century child loss poetry will document Wroth's development of a speaker who finds favor with the general public. Operating from the premises of child death and heartbreak and oftentimes

blending both within a single sonnet, Wroth deploys four traditional tropes of maternal elegy as opportunities to showcase her speaker Pamphilia's emotional maturity, which in turn grants Wroth authority as a female author. In the seventeenth century, a woman's management of bereavement reflected her godliness (Clarke 74), so Wroth models an ideal response to loss in an effort to portray herself as chaste, orthodox, and therefore, a valuable literary figure in the public realm.

Wroth begins to cultivate a persona of feminine piety in the opening sonnet of *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* by inscribing within it the elegiac commonplace of resignation toward one's loss by viewing the event as ordained by God (Hammons 28). The inaugural poem of the sequence functions to explain the onset of Pamphilia's love for Amphilanthus, which is of course the inspiration for the remaining sonnets. Pamphilia becomes Amphilanthus' lover as a result of a joint effort by Cupid and Venus, who forcefully insert a "hart flaming more then all the rest" into her chest (9). After Pamphilia's violent heart transplant, the speaker first protests against her new organ and hopes that Cupid's replacement would soon "depart" from her chest (13). However, upon recognizing the permanence of the exchange and its indelible consequences for her life course, Pamphilia laments, "O mee: a lover I have binn" (14), a sentiment of resignation that evokes contemporary accounts of child loss. For example, the speaker in Mary Carey's elegy "On the death of my 4th, & only Child" assents to God's decision to take her son by saying, "thy will be done" (2). I do not wish to argue that Wroth correlates Cupid's authority to God's unarguable will, yet I do believe that the speakers of both poems are equally genuine in their submission to an entity that has more power over their

lives than they do. Pamphilia's gradual acceptance of her new heart places Wroth's sonnets in conversation with maternal elegies that demonstrate a similar attitude of submission to the events in one's life that are beyond a mother's control.

Poem P7, Wroth's first song embedded within *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, reiterates Pamphilia's willingness to surrender to her "fortune" (24), a word that appears twice in the pastoral poem. Not only does Wroth's speaker believe that a force greater than herself has the ability to influence her life, she acquiesces to it. By describing Pamphilia as a "true slave to fortune's spight" (36), Wroth communicates to the reader how her speaker has relinquished control over her life. Fortune's wheel has been particularly cruel to Pamphilia who has recently been "beetraid" by one she believed to be her "truest love" (19). Rather than denying or rebelling against the "grief [that] oprest" her (18), Pamphilia verily embraces the fate that has been assigned to her. After being abandoned by her beloved, she explains that "now willow must I weare" (23), a symbol of "disappointed love" (Wroth 90). Pamphilia's total submission to her sad fortune is apparent in her use of the willow: using its "branches" (25), "Gyrlands" (30), "barck" (33), and "roote" (37), Pamphilia creates an outfit of mourning as well as a grave "bed" where "nightly [she] will lye" (37-8). Mirroring Pamphilia's conviction that fortune governs her life course is her use of the auxiliary verbs "must" (23), "shall" (27), and "will" (38), which implies that it is imperative for her to give in to her sorrow. The presence of "must" in Wroth's poem P7 resembles Katherine Philips' use of the same word in the elegy for her son to express her sense of the inevitability of grief. Philips suggests that she feels compelled to mourn the loss of her child in the same way that

Wroth's speaker is drawn to the willow tree for its association with her identity as a bereaved lover. Wroth's use of the elegiac commonplace of resignation is not isolated to the two poems discussed in this thesis; in reality, Pamphilia strikes a posture of submission throughout the sonnet sequence. By yielding to the caprices of fortune or, alternatively, the masculine presence of Cupid as in sonnets 1 and 8, Wroth shapes Pamphilia into a speaker who displays an appropriate feminine response to grief and loss.

Another elegiac commonplace, acceptance of one's loss, is also present in Wroth's sonnet sequence. Closely related to the commonplace of resignation to God's will, Wroth uses both tropes typical of seventeenth-century elegy to impress upon her readers an image of Pamphilia as a pious and obedient woman. Wroth evokes the commonplace of acceptance in sonnet 85 by first introducing the theme of loss via her allusion to miscarriage. As previously mentioned, Wroth uses the image of Venus miscarrying Cupid as a metaphor for Pamphilia's desire to shed her feelings for Amphilanthus. Using the miscarriage trope to establish a tragic scene of devastation and loss, Wroth can then introduce the commonplace of acceptance, which ultimately proves her female speaker's unwavering moral strength. Pamphilia's willingness to endure the loss of her lover is conveyed in the sonnet's final couplet, which proposes, "This childe for love . . . ought like monster borne / Bee from the court of Love, and reason torne" (13-4). Most significant about the decision to abort the "childe for love" is that it issues from Pamphilia herself and not another character. More than accepting her loss, Pamphilia sanctions it and claims it as her own idea. In this moment, Pamphilia resembles Anne Halkett, who in her autobiography chose the death of her own daughter

rather than allowing her to live and “bring dishonor to that blessed name” (Clarke 75). Pamphilia’s wish to abort her feelings and forgo a life of romance describes a woman of profound emotional endurance. At the end of Wroth’s sonnet 85, the reader is left to observe a speaker who fully embraces her loss with the understanding that it is the best – and only – solution to her heartbreak. Pamphilia’s acquiescence to her society’s expectations for a woman in mourning reveals the public nature of Wroth’s rhetorical strategies. Remembering that elegies and other texts that communicated traditional cultural values were akin to commercial goods with considerable worth, it seems likely that Pamphilia’s morally imitable character helped to prepare Wroth’s manuscript for circulation.

Wroth’s indebtedness to the elegiac genre is manifested in the presence of a third commonplace in her sonnet sequence, which is “the emphasis . . . on the general significance of spiritual lessons to the writer herself, not on the pain of her suffering child” (Clarke 72). This elegiac trope, mapped onto the lover-beloved relationship between Pamphilia and Amphilanthus is further evidence for my argument that Wroth styled her authorial persona toward the end of establishing herself as a public author. Clarke explains that this commonplace generated parental narratives of child loss that were largely silent on the subject, which today would feel “unsatisfactory” and “inappropriate” due to the authors’ unequal attention to themselves rather than the physical reality of death (Clarke 72). The characterization of these child loss texts as highly internal and self-conscious is also applicable to Wroth’s sonnet sequence, and indeed, Masten and other scholars use this language in their analyses of her poetry.

Masten describes Wroth as a silent author, searching for subjectivity, and desiring “self-enclosure” (84). Kinney concurs, noting that “both the speaker’s pain and her inner torment are much more visible [in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*] than any connection with the object of her desire” – or the loss of him (xxiii). Though Masten and I agree that Wroth creates a withdrawn speaker whose subjectivity is based on “emptiness, lack, loss, and absence” (81), I read Pamphilia’s journey into herself as a rhetorical maneuver that transforms her into a public figure suited for circulation. Wroth’s focused attention to Pamphilia’s interiority allows her to explore the depth of her piety and her ability to temper her emotions in the wake of personal tragedy.

Wroth’s strategy of highlighting Pamphilia’s intellectual, emotional, and mental state is exaggerated as she simultaneously subordinates Amphilanthus’ role in the sonnet sequence, even though he is the sole cause of Pamphilia’s woeful mood. Sonnet 21 firmly establishes the importance of Pamphilia’s inner life over Amphilanthus with its repetition of the word “thoughts” (1), which appears eleven times in this poem alone. By distancing Pamphilia from the source of her grief, Wroth affords her greater freedom to determine the extent of her mental fortitude. In sonnet 4 for example, Pamphilia recalls a period of intense meditation on her internal afflictions when she “with bitter sobs, and paine, / Privately groan’d” (5-6). Wroth reveals the payout of this exercise in emotional tolerance and stamina in the final two stanzas: from her melancholic solitude, Pamphilia retrieves a “memory to good . . . of those best dayes” (9, 11), which eventually brings “backe [her] life” (14). Significantly, Wroth traces the root of personal solace to Pamphilia instead of attributing it to the actions of Amphilanthus, Cupid, Venus, or any other character. Like a

grieving mother who discovers spiritual wisdom from her experience with child loss, Pamphilia extracts a moment of hope from the abyss of her “darke night” (1), which directs the reader’s attention to her, the one who lost, and away from him who has departed.

Sonnet 36 depicts Pamphilia in a similarly pensive mood on the cause of her recent pain. In the first three stanzas, Wroth’s speaker sits alone with only the memories of her “long trouble . . . of love’s unrest” to keep her company (1-2). However, after suffering through her feelings of “colde . . . grieffe (7), Pamphilia is mercifully visited by a kind Fortune who sends her “joy” (10) and relieves her “clouds of doubt” (11), a “reward” for a very deserving Pamphilia who so patiently endured her emotional affliction first brought on by Amphilanthus (9). As in sonnet 4 that ends on a note of positivity and renewal, sonnet 36 also foreshadows a new beginning for the lovelorn Pamphilia. This unexpected yet welcome stroke of good luck was only possible because of Pamphilia’s obedience to Fortune’s commands, as Wroth makes clear in the final lines of the sonnet. By heeding Fortune’s advice to exercise patience in suffering, Pamphilia becomes the beneficiary of his whims, but more importantly, she learns the valuable lesson that “love / Indeed was best, when I did least itt move” (13-4). Pamphilia’s newfound insight into the proper way to tend to love was only possible by her willingness to engage in a period of introspection induced by emotional adversity. Pamphilia’s outlook toward loss and heartbreak is akin to the father’s in sonnet 27, whose story of a failed relationship is relayed to his son and later retold by Pamphilia. The moral of the sonnet as it were appears in the poem’s final couplet when the father advises his young

son that “To love is noe offence / Butt doubt in youth, in age breed penitence” (13-4). Wroth is careful to draw a correlation between the father’s wisdom and his previous experiences with “grief which still [his] sorrowes move” (12). Sonnets 21, 27, and 36 illustrate how Wroth’s sequence is regulated in many ways by the inverse relationship of physical loss and intellectual gain. When the loss of a child or any loved one is regarded as an opportunity to achieve personal growth, the mother/author may assume a calm and rational approach to grief that was the seventeenth-century standard of female virtue. As Pamphilia models a mature response to pain and morality that is not dependent on an external source of support or guidance, she becomes an exemplar of female conduct of great value in the public sphere.

The fourth and final commonplace of child loss poetry and elegies in general that I will discuss in the thesis is most suggestive of Wroth’s aspirations to be a public author. Her appropriation of the commonplace in which the elegist turns inward, hiding his or her emotions from others, points to Wroth’s understanding of herself as an author of the public sphere. This trope, like Wroth’s miscarriage imagery, seems at first to be contradictory to Wroth’s aim to gain recognition from the public because it casts Pamphilia as resistant to appearing on “stage” and giving an “open showe” of her emotions as in sonnet 48 (13-4). While other scholars have interpreted Pamphilia’s refusal to freely share her emotions as a sign of Wroth’s desire to keep her manuscripts private, this behavior, when examined in an elegiac context, is actually a rhetorical strategy modeled after contemporary child loss poetry that marked her manuscript as a public document. Brady writes that seventeenth-century elegists “refuse[d] to display

their feelings publicly, criticizing those who do show emotions, and reminding readers that . . . schemers could fake bodily expression” (69). Wroth’s attribution of this commonplace of emotional restraint to Pamphilia is an effective authorizing technique on several levels. It portrays Pamphilia, and by extension, Wroth in compliance with her culture’s demand for a measured response to grief. Moreover, the yoking of this commonplace to Wroth’s miscarriage trope throughout the sonnet sequence reinforces the image of Wroth as an author who infused elements of other literary genres into her poetry that would have attracted a wide and diverse readership to her manuscripts.

My analysis of this final elegiac commonplace will reevaluate sonnets 40 and 41, which have already been identified as containing the miscarriage trope, in order to observe Pamphilia’s impressive management of her emotions during her experience with loss. While Wroth uses miscarriage imagery to portray Pamphilia as a moral and obedient figure, she constructs Pamphilia’s relationship to Amphilanthus toward the same end. Both the instances of miscarriage and Pamphilia’s troubled affair with her beloved are distressing experiences that are nonetheless met with the proper mode and volume of grief from Pamphilia. In this way, Pamphilia’s response to Amphilanthus is an additional authorizing strategy for Wroth that erects within her manuscript an ideal image of femininity. By situating the trajectory of Pamphilia and Amphilanthus’ relationship within the tradition of child loss poetry, we may emend Masten’s claim that Wroth’s sonnets are “deployed against the making public, the circulation, of a woman’s story” (79).

Wroth establishes Pamphilia as a paradigm of emotional stability in the miscarriage sonnets 40 and 41, which draw a parallel between the experience of child loss and the Petrarchan lover-beloved relationship. As noted earlier, sonnet 40 is forthcoming in its description of miscarriage with Wroth's mention of an "unnatural . . . birth" (2), while sonnet 41 resumes the theme from the preceding sonnet as indicated by words such as "poore hart" (1), "my grief" (2), and "thy deerest blood" (3). The pointed association of child loss with Pamphilia's relationship with Amphilanthus underscores the distress he has caused to Wroth's speaker. Quite notably, the emotional torment Pamphilia endures has not enticed her to visibly or vocally disclose her suffering to others. Sonnet 41 begins with Pamphilia's assertion that only her heart can "witness" (1) her love for Amphilanthus because she is intentionally "hid[ing]" it "from all save only one who should itt see" (11-2). The sonnet concludes with Pamphilia's declaration that love is dignified only when kept secret, not when it is made into a "show" (14). Though she admits that it is painful to refrain from disclosing her emotions to anyone except Amphilanthus, Pamphilia nevertheless stays faithful to her conviction that true love should not be forced to declare itself to the world (9-12). Pamphilia's decision to remain in emotional agony and control her response to the pain creates an image of a godly, almost martyr-like woman. So determined to internalize her pain, Pamphilia allows her grief to shed her own heart's blood before it will affect Amphilanthus – or anyone else. In this moment, Pamphilia resembles a seventeenth-century woman writing about the death of her deceased child, who understood that she was "expected [to] censure [her] immoderate sorrow" from others who might be watching her ("Women" 153). The

presence of this elegiac commonplace in sonnets 40 and 41 generates a seemingly private text that nevertheless describes a publicly appealing feminine and maternal ideal.

Pamphilia's tendency to self-reflect while also refusing to outwardly express her emotions is a theme pursued throughout the sequence. She declares in sonnet 45 that "most feeling" is proved when "words are most scant" (10) and then elaborates on this perspective in the subsequent sonnet when she explains "'T'is nott a showe of sighes, or teares can prove / Who loves indeed which blasts of fained love . . . Butt in the soule true love safety lies" (9-10, 12). Sonnet 68 transmits a similar message as Pamphilia assures Amphilanthus that she still harbors feelings of love for him even though they cannot be "discharg'd" from her body (3). For every attempt to release the emotions that are "smother'd in [her] grieved brest" (1), her body only rebels by pushing them "deepe[r]" (6) inside of her until Pamphilia is utterly "swallow'd by [her] unrest" (8). Unable to vocalize her emotions to Amphilanthus, Pamphilia remains confident that her "faith still cries, [and that] Love will nott falsefy" (14). Pamphilia's ability to maintain her loyalty and affection for Amphilanthus despite suffering through a psychic pain that refuses to leave her is a true testament to her mental fortitude and emotional integrity. Throughout the sonnet sequence, Pamphilia appears completely capable of managing life's injustices, recognizing that inflated shows of emotion do little to assuage pain and are in fact unnecessary to prove the sincerity of one's true feelings. By reading Pamphilia's character in this way, we may better understand the reason for her lament in sonnet 48 that she has "bin made this stage of woe / Wher sad disasters have theyr open showe" (12-3). Instead of concluding, like Masten and others, that these lines demonstrate

Pamphilia's yearning for privacy and seclusion, I read this sonnet as expressing her disappointment for momentarily displaying her emotions to the public and transgressing the cultural expectations for a grieving woman. Neither Wroth nor Pamphilia strive to become private figures but are more concerned with presenting an image of religious conformity and emotional restraint to the public.

In addition to the miscarriage trope, Pamphilia and Amphilanthus' relationship also becomes a platform for Wroth to showcase her speaker's orthodox behavior and traditional values. Like Mary Sidney's elegies for her brother, Wroth's "poems share the subject of the loss of a loved one" (Fienberg 187), which allows Wroth to present an acutely silent, private response to loss in order to prepare her sonnets for public recognition and acceptance. Wroth overtly endorses this mode of managing grief in sonnet 43, which begins by describing Pamphilia's condition of mourning. Covered in "Darke . . . Night" like a widower grieving for her husband (1-2), Pamphilia pines for the "company" of her inconstant lover Amphilanthus (3). After the first three stanzas confirm Pamphilia's state of utter isolation from Amphilanthus or any other character, Wroth assigns her protagonist two new companions in addition to Night, "Silence, and grief" (12). Pamphilia's effortless incorporation into the trio of "companions" is evidenced by the lack of discord and "strife" among the friends (14). That Pamphilia considers silence a worthy partner who matches her own natural disposition is a clear indication that she will continue to suppress her anguish as a result of losing Amphilanthus. Through the pointed substitution of silence for Amphilanthus as her new companion and confidante,

Pamphilia proves her exemplary moral character founded on the principles of loyalty and restraint.

Pamphilia's solitude also provides the emotional landscape for sonnet 57, though her loneliness arises for a different reason as compared to sonnet 43. In the latter, Pamphilia resents her isolation having been abandoned by Amphilanthus, yet in sonnet 57, Wroth's protagonist willingly withdraws from any form of human companionship knowing that "the time is come to part" (1). Wroth implies that Pamphilia's removal from society is more than a temporary leave of absence but the death of her protagonist. Pamphilia explains that she renounces this life in order to escape its "lyfe-killing smart" (2), knowing that the consequence of her actions are a "lyfe in grief to spend" (12), which suggests a form of eternal punishment after death. In sonnet 57, Pamphilia's death seems to be a form of sacrifice in which she meets a premature end so that her beloved Amphilanthus is allowed to "goe / to Meet more joy" (3-4). Sonnet 32 corroborates my reading of Pamphilia as a martyr-like figure when she declares that "Grief [can] come as welcome ghest / Since I must suffer, for an others rest" (9-10). Pamphilia's noble selflessness becomes even more apparent in the final stanza of sonnet 32 when she demands for "all . . . waits [to be placed] on mee" (14) and "nott from those I love" (12). Sonnet 32 helpfully illuminates the reason for Pamphilia's self-imposed exile from society in sonnet 57: she is alone because she is preparing herself as an offering in place of Amphilanthus to protect him from physical or emotional pain. As in sonnet 43, Wroth exploits Pamphilia's strained relationship with Amphilanthus brought on by his conspicuous absence from most of the poems to advance an altogether flattering portrait

of her protagonist. Sonnet 57 features Pamphilia's compassion, humility, and ultimately, her ability to love another, all positive traits that might draw in a large readership to Wroth's sonnets.

Wroth elaborates on Pamphilia's admirable character in sonnet 59 and does not relent until the end of her sonnet sequence in sonnet 101. Out of Pamphilia's experience of the loss of her lover that is prominent in both poems, Wroth reveals her protagonist's emotional endurance and mature perspective toward life's constant struggles. Throughout the course of her sonnet sequence, Wroth seems to suggest that the condition of loss both evokes and sharpens Pamphilia's very best qualities. In sonnet 59, Wroth returns to a motif begun earlier in the sequence, the notion of Amphilanthus as an unfaithful lover. His decision to love another woman and make her the new "ruler" of his heart is the impetus in this sonnet for Pamphilia's sense of loss (8). Unfortunately for Pamphilia, she is still in love with Amphilanthus despite his betrayal as indicated by her vain hope that "I noe ruler had" (9). As long as her heart remains faithful to Amphilanthus, Pamphilia suffers from the pain of unrequited love. Instead of soliciting the reader's sympathy for Pamphilia's anguished state, Wroth invites us to admire her and raise her up as a model of feminine strength. Pamphilia knows that Amphilanthus' behavior has given her "reason [to] complaine" (3), yet she does not, choosing an alternative course of patient acceptance of her plight indicated by the note of resignation at the sonnet's end: "I . . . must not taste the best / Fed must sterve, and restles rest" (13-4). Wroth features Pamphilia in a moment of deep despair, demonstrating that women were not necessarily

inclined toward histrionic grief but were wholly capable of striking a posture of solemn composure amidst heartbreak.

Finally, in sonnet 101, Wroth showcases Pamphilia's ability to tolerate emotional pain but also to learn from it. By transforming an encounter with loss into a spiritual boon, Pamphilia proves that she can transcend the heartbreak that inevitably follows after losing a loved one. As in the previous sonnets, Wroth begins by documenting the circumstances of Pamphilia's loss. In sonnet 101, the reason is simple: Pamphilia stands alone because Amphilanthus has chosen to "depart" (5). Her state of solitude reaps great returns, however, for "when all alone, I thinke upon thy paine . . . then howlerly thy lessons I doe learn" (9, 11). These lessons appear to be of a religious variety on account of Wroth's choice of words such as "glory" (12), "the world[']s . . . end" (13), and "thy lasting power" (14). Indeed, the final two stanzas seem to refer to Christ's passion upon the cross rather than Pamphilia's own grief. What is most impressive, even enviable, about Pamphilia's experience with loss is her ability to access God's infinite wisdom that was manifested in the crucifixion – the ultimate symbol of pain, loss, suffering, mourning, and death. Pamphilia uses the loss of Amphilanthus as a vehicle that elevates her toward a level of spirituality that is tantalizingly close to the Savior himself. Wroth is not drawing a strict parallel between Pamphilia and Christ, but the mere association of Pamphilia with a religious figure is still an effective rhetorical strategy that advertises Pamphilia, Wroth, and her sonnets as orthodox commodities appropriate for consumption by the general public.

My reading of Wroth's poems is meant to revise the way we read her entire sonnet sequence. Her miscarriage trope is foundational to my analysis, and though it is unconventional approach compared to other studies, I justify my decision with the fact that references to this form of child loss were highly unusual in the seventeenth century and thus deserve our attention when they do appear. Using the miscarriage trope as a prompt to shape her speaker Pamphilia into a model of feminine stoicism and piety, Wroth transforms an image of child loss into an effective authorizing strategy that allowed her to write as a woman in the early modern period. Pamphilia's awareness but also adherence to the cultural standards of her time that prescribed silence and submission in response to loss reflects favorably on Wroth, her creator, as it implies that Wroth also lived in accordance with her society's expectations of women. The presentation of Pamphilia's exemplary character in the context of mourning, truly beyond reproach, might have appealed to contemporary readers of both sexes of Wroth's manuscripts. Wroth's construction of Pamphilia and Amphilanthus' relationship, notable more for the tension rather than harmony between the two, is another authorizing strategy by which Wroth generates a morally admirable female speaker as the protagonist of her sonnet sequence. In response to Amphilanthus' perpetual absence in her life, Pamphilia consistently displays patient acceptance and emotional endurance of her sad fate as a heartbroken lover. Pamphilia's way of relating to child death and romantic loss would have resonated with Wroth's readers who lived in a culture of grief that promoted a measured response to death and loss that Pamphilia embodies.

In this chapter, I have argued that Wroth's construction of her authorial persona of Pamphilia bears striking similarities to maternal child loss elegies whose female authors incorporated various commonplaces and rhetorical strategies in order to produce an orthodox text if ever their manuscripts were to be published and circulated. The presence of several elegiac commonplaces in Wroth's sonnet sequence substantiates my claim that we may consider Wroth's manuscript a public document, and Wroth, a public author. The development of Pamphilia's character using elegiac commonplaces that would have found favor with contemporary readers indicates Wroth's efforts to prepare her manuscript for circulation within a literary and cultural climate in which all female-authored texts had the potential to become public.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

In early modern England, women occupied a unique position in relationship to death that was refracted by gender and the often-ambiguous boundary between the public and private realm. As a general rule, women were expected to grieve in private while their male counterparts, owing to their “privileged access to . . . publicly recognized and approved rites of mourning” could be found delivering funeral sermons or processing wills (Becker 138). The elegy as a mode of expressing grief in literature offers modern day readers valuable insight into the nature of female lamentation within the seventeenth-century’s gendered culture of grief. Approximately one hundred and fifty elegies by women emerge from this period, a fact that dispels any lingering doubt about the early modern woman’s desire and ability to express herself in writing. The significant volume of elegies also bespeaks of “the unusual license to write and publish afforded to women in proximity to death” (“Women” 4). The event of death was the creative impetus for translations of pious works, mother’s legacies, maternal blessings, and of course, elegies. Phillipy argues that women’s essential role in rituals of mourning and their contributions to defining grief have been overlooked in recent scholarship (4). A careful study of the early modern elegy is one strategy for bolstering our knowledge of women’s perspective on death and loss in the early modern period.

This thesis has placed the poetry of Lady Mary Wroth within an elegiac context with all of its complexities that arise from the tensions inherent in gender and the public-private debate. Kate Lilley writes of the elegy that it “upsets the putative divisions between . . . literary and non-literary women, private and public, occasional and non-occasional writing” (72). The same could be said of Wroth’s poems. Of course, Wroth’s poetry and elegies by her contemporaries are also connected by the theme of loss, which is the foundation for both works of literature. The primary text in question, Wroth’s sonnet sequence *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, does not contain a single elegy, yet her poetry is fundamentally related to the elegiac genre in that the speaker Pamphilia can only be described as a woman in mourning. Like an elegist who “marks the recognition of desire as lack” (Lilley 85), Pamphilia’s deep-seated affection for her beloved Amphilanthus is understood through the condition of his absence in her life. Pamphilia’s laments also have much in common with maternal elegies, which tend to emphasize the material, physical aspects of death (“Women” 169). What Lilley describes as the elegy’s “logic of renunciation and cancellation” underwrites the narrative of Wroth’s sonnet sequence as illustrated by the vivid descriptions of miscarriage, her speaker Pamphilia’s own death as in sonnet 57, and Pamphilia’s repeated requests to fade into the darkness of night. My methodology of situating Wroth’s Petrarchan sonnets within the context of elegy certainly deviates from previous scholarship, yet I maintain that the comparison of two seemingly unrelated genres is a fruitful exercise that organically grows out from the elegiac rhetoric present within Wroth’s sonnets.

Wroth's use of elegiac commonplaces to describe the nature of Pamphilia's grief for Amphilanthus served as the primary evidence for my argument that Wroth should be classified as a public author. The influence of this genre on *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* demonstrates that Wroth was in dialogue with her contemporaries and thus belonged to several literary communities. Her sonnet sequence is a highly communal document that was to a great extent determined by her engagement with the social context in which she lived and composed. In accordance with my definition of public as that which is of or related to the nation, state, or community, Wroth may be identified as public author on the basis of her consistent participation within her coteries, whether formal or informal.

To be clear, I am not arguing that evidence of borrowing from other genres always leads to the conclusion that an author wrote for the public or desired publication. An author's relationship to the public or, conversely, the private realm cannot be conclusively deduced on the basis of literary influence alone. However, I have attempted to show that drawing upon the elegiac genre in a way that generates an orthodox, pious authorial persona was an effective authorizing strategy for early modern women writers. The incorporation of certain elegiac tropes and conventions does suggest the author's desire for public engagement, or at the very least, her awareness of the possibility of publication when these tropes are manipulated toward the end of shaping a culturally acceptable text. Did other female authors in the seventeenth century take advantage of the literary value inherent in so many elegiac commonplaces? I believe that Wroth is not alone in her recognition of the utility of these tropes, for she cannot be the only female author forced to reckon with the cultural climate that limited women's ability to write. To

test my theory, we should consider other early modern women writers and evaluate them in an elegiac context, noting any instances of manipulating the rhetoric of elegy to create a text that is in line with their society's standards of conduct during mourning. We might begin with texts like Wroth's that describe the painful experience of loss, though not because of physical death. As *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* shows, a woman may enter into a period of mourning for reasons other than death and that these losses nonetheless have significant consequences for the bereaved's psyche. By using elegy as a lens to study texts representing an array of genres, we may expose the public aspect of many more female-penned manuscripts that have previously been obscured by the assumption that women in the seventeenth century did not write for an audience.

The marriage of elements from the elegy with the Petrarchan sonnet form is an effective authorizing strategy for Wroth because it yields a portrait of an aggrieved lover tempered by pious restraint and humility. Whereas the male sonneteer would profess his love for the object of his desire and use hyperbole to describe her physical characteristics, Wroth's speaker Pamphilia deigns to express her emotions of grief, anguish, and disappointment, even to her beloved Amphilanthus. With Pamphilia as the protagonist of her sonnet sequence, Wroth gains poetic authority to write from within a culture that presumed women's emotional incontinence yet valued the supposed rare and exceptional woman who could control the passions inside of her. Therefore, the elegiac commonplaces are more than a tool to gain authority – they become a provocative method for Wroth to negotiate a radical shift in cultural attitudes toward females in mourning. As Wroth's manuscripts circulated within and beyond her literary community,

so did the portrait of a woman who was ruled not by emotion but loyalty to the moral virtues of acceptance, patience, and faith. The consistent application of elegiac tropes into *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* strongly suggests Wroth's awareness of their literary and social purchase in the early modern period. It seems painfully shortsighted to assume that she was the only female author to recognize the opportunities for authorship that could be gained by writing about loss with the rhetoric of elegy. To advance the scholarship on early modern women writers, we might continue to search for authors who wrote for a public audience since we know the strategies they could have used to do so.

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