

**“SLEEP FY POSSESS  
MEE NOTT”: THE  
RETURN OF THE  
REPRESSED IN LADY  
MARY WROTH’S  
*PAMPHILIA TO  
AMPHILANTHUS*,  
SONNETS 16 AND 17 [P18  
AND P19]<sup>1</sup>**

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Despite recent feminist and gender-oriented interest in Lady Mary Wroth’s sonnets, her worth as a sonneteer has been misconstrued as traditionally Petrarchan and as an imitator of both Sir Philip and Sir Robert Sidney. However, as I first introduced in another paper, Wroth’s persona (Pamphilia) must be considered not as a traditional Petrarchan speaker that in its female version incorporates a figure of the Patient Griselda type with whom female readers must identify—as it has often been interpreted—but as a figure from whom women must actually distance in order to be aware of patriarchal impositions and restrictions.

It is my aim to discuss in this paper how actually Wroth shows in two of her sonnets that Pamphilia’s self-imposed faithfulness to her philanderer lover—following a self-effacing internalisation of patriarchal values—provokes her sexual repression that finds an outlet in sexual dreams with the result that they become a further source of suffering for Pamphilia and one of the arguments in Wroth’s implicit denunciation of women’s plight in her time.

My discussion will centre on an analysis of the texts from the point of view of a combination of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis as well as Otto Vaenius’s emblems (*Amorum emblemata*, 1608), a text available to Wroth and which, it is most likely, she used as a source for her imagery dealing with love, sex and dreams.

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<sup>1</sup>The discrepancy between the numbers of the sonnets and the numbers in square brackets is the result of Roberts’ double numeration. Roberts establishes two different numeric series, one for sonnets and another one for songs, and also gives a number preceded by the P that stands for *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* to each poem in order to indicate the position of each poem in the sequence. Thus sonnets 16 and 17 are in fact poems 18 and 19 since there are two songs: Song 1 [P7] between sonnets 6 and 7, and Song 2 [P14] between sonnets 12 and 13. Hereafter, I will only use the sonnet numbers 16 and 17 to refer to the texts I will discuss.

Surprisingly, despite the steady growth and development of feminist and gender studies in academia, critics have failed to do justice to Lady Mary Wroth's sequence of sonnets *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* (1621), and in fact they have actually misread and misinterpreted it. Basically, the main reason for this misconception is the persistent consideration of Lady Mary Wroth (1587-1653) as a mere imitator of Petrarch and her uncle Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586) as well as her father Sir Robert Sidney (1563-1626). As a consequence, Wroth is denied an independent personality as a writer, even by feminist and gender-studies critics, who consider her as inadequate since she does not create an independent female speaker given the lack of referents or a tradition of a female discourse in sonnet sequences.<sup>2</sup>

Contrary to this opinion, I do think that Wroth did in fact manage to create an independent female voice with a distinctively female discourse. My contention is that she participates of some of the characteristics of *écriture féminine*, such as the use of masquerade and the introduction of gaps that the reader has to fill up if he or she is to decode the message properly.<sup>3</sup> A message that I consider to be proto-feminist.

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<sup>2</sup>For a discussion of the bibliography on and interpretations of Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, see Cora (fthc). Krontiris correctly identifies Wroth's psychological skills: "...the author's psychological insight into the effects on the female mind of notions like constancy, and her awareness that the value of such notions is culturally produced and therefore not permanent" (Krontiris 1992: 138), but she falls short in her interpretation of Wroth's *Urania* and *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* when at the end of her section dealing with this author (Krontiris 1992: 140) she sees that Wroth attempts a reconciliation of criticism of patriarchal values with Pamphilia's constancy and incurs in hesitations and contradictions because she lacked models in contestation. During the process of preparing this article for publication, our colleague and fellow member of SEDERI, Jorge Casanova (University of Huelva), informed me of his own contribution to Wroth studies with his M.A. dissertation (Casanova 1999) and he most kindly forwarded me a copy of it, thus offering far more information to our previous conversations (SEDERI, Huelva, 2000) on the importance of *Amorum emblemata* (1608) by Otto Van Veen (Otho Vaenius). In his dissertation, Casanova explores the relationship between Wroth's sonnets and those of both Sir Philip and Sir Robert Sidney respectively, and her debt to books of emblems, especially those of Van Veen, Thomas Combe (*The Theatre of Fine Devices*, 1593) and Henry Peacham (*Minerva Britanna*, 1612) to create a female discourse that focuses on Pamphilia's private space as an exile from court—as a contrast to the public space and disclosure of male sonneteers—, and the body as an alienating element—particularly, because of miscarriage or abortion—, that he discusses in the light of Julia Kristeva's notion of abjection. In his study, Casanova shows how Wroth does, indeed, offer very different images from those of the male sonneteers and, therefore, creates a discourse of her own. However, Casanova downplays the subversive and transgressive character of Wroth's sonnets, which is precisely what I emphasise with my psychoanalytical reading of the sonnets subordinated to the characterisation of Wroth's sonnets as an example of *écriture féminine*.

<sup>3</sup>For an introduction to the characteristics of *écriture féminine*, see Jacobus (1986), Jones (1986) and Cixous (1995). The first two essays are metacritical in scope as they discuss criticism,

*Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* is a collection of eighty sonnets and nineteen songs (and six unpublished poems in a manuscript kept at the Folger Library, Folger MS Va104) divided into four different sections (Roberts 1983: 44-45). A first section comprises fifty-five poems (P1-P55) and opens with a dream vision in which Pamphilia is overcome by love and deals with her inner conflict provoked by the contending forces that prompt her to both resist and yield to passion. However, Pamphilia decides that she will accept love as something she chooses, not as imposed by the gods. In the second section (P56-76), after an interlude of five songs (P57-62), the sonnets (P63-P72) develop Pamphilia's negative feelings of doubt, jealousy and despair, and her complaints about the whimsical, Anacreontic Cupid figure, whom she accuses of playing with human affections. Eventually, Pamphilia reconciles with Cupid and promises to write a crown of praise which actually forms the following section. In the crown (P77-P90), she acknowledges Cupid's power as a just monarch, only to change her opinion again in the fourth and last section (P91-P103). First, in a group of four songs (P91-P94), she considers what the best account of Cupid is, whether a positive or negative one, and then ends up (P95-P103) accepting pain as the unavoidable counterpart of love and the unpredictable character of human feelings which make her turn her hopes to heavenly love in the two final sonnets.

The whole sequence is appended with separate pagination to Wroth's lengthy, unfinished prose romance *The Countesse of Mountgomerie's Urania* (1621) in which she tells the adventures and misadventures of noble Pamphilia in her search for her missing love Amphilanthus who happens to be inconstant and unfaithful to her. Pamphilia decides to embrace chastity to offer a living contrast and example to the inconstancy of men and her sonnets are the expression of her private feelings and musings on love and her protestations of chastity and constancy elicited by the absence of Amphilanthus, her missing, inconstant love. If read independently from the *Urania*, Pamphilia's chastity will appear to be the endorsement of the speaker's attitude to accept the position

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whereas the second one is a primary source in criticism and a central one in *écriture féminine* theory. Jones is particularly critical with French theories of *féminité* and favours social, materialist considerations over psychosexual and “mystic” ones. Although dealing with masquerade in the social world, Finucci's essay (1994) is also interesting for understanding the constructed character of the female and male roles in society, and how women actually manage to subvert conventions by overemphasising the socially accepted characteristics of this role and also assuming a female role of a higher class than the one that they belong to. Her section on the history of the concept of masquerade in psychoanalysis and feminist studies (Finucci 1994: 65-66) is really useful. However, Finucci studies how a man, Ludovico Ariosto, uses this subversive strategies to characterise women in his epic poem *Orlando furioso* (1532), and she gets to the conclusion that femininity can only be defined, played, or subverted when put in relation with a male standard and conception of femininity.

of passiveness and masochism favoured by the patriarchal order. However, if read in the light of key passages from the romance, especially the words against constancy of Urania, Amphilanthus' younger sister—the eponymous though secondary character in the romance, but in fact Wroth's true voice—we will see that Pamphilia must not be considered as an example of female virtue or, for that matter, a patient Griselda figure.<sup>4</sup> Urania tells Pamphilia at a given stage in the romance:

'Tis pitie said Urania, that ever that fruitlesse thing Constancy was taught you as a vertue, since for vertues sake you will love it, as having true possession of your soule, but understand, this vertue hath limits to hold it in, being a vertue, but thus that it is a vice in them that breake it, but those with whom it is broken, are by the breach free to leave or choose again where more staidnes may be found; besides 'tis a dangerous thing to hold that opinion, which in time will prove flat heresie. (*Urania*, p. 400, cited. in Krontiris 1992: 138)<sup>5</sup>

Urania's words actually invite the reader, especially the female reader, to read *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* against the grain and establish some distance from Pamphilia's acceptance of the patriarchal model of female virtue. Wroth introduces a gap, a liminal space that both separates and protects the sequence from patriarchal reading assumptions. Therefore, Pamphilia must be seen as an instance of how patriarchal values only work in detriment of women's minds, for in the sequence, Pamphilia's chastity induces melancholy, sexual repression and eventually neurosis.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>For patient Griselda, see Chaucer's "Clerk's Tale" as the first appearance of this archetypal character in English literature. For a discussion of the fortunes of this character in the Renaissance or Early Modern Period, see Bronfman (1990).

<sup>5</sup>Krontiris quotes from the original, seventeenth-century Folio, not Roberts' edition.

<sup>6</sup>On discussing feminist criticism in the section entitled "Reading as a Woman" (1987: 43-64), Jonathan Culler criticises feminist reading and points out to this liminal space that I speak of, not as created by the writer within the text, but within the female reader herself:

[f]or a woman to read as a woman is not to repeat an identity or an experience that is given but to play a role she constructs with reference to her identity as a woman, which is also a construct, so that the series can continue: a woman reading as a woman reading as a woman. The non coincidence reveals an interval, a division within woman or within any reading subject and the "experience" of that subject. (Culler 1987: 64)

Later, he also broadens the perspective and applies the same *caveat* to any reader: "To read is to operate with the hypothesis of a reader, and there is always a gap or division within reading" (Culler 1987: 67). Of course, Culler does this as a move to problematise "stories of reading" and uphold Deconstruction's practices. See Wynne-Davies (1992) for an interesting discussion of the same practices in Wroth's masques inset in the *Urania*. Wynn-Davies holds that in these masques "...it is possible to locate a genuinely female voice in the discursive practices of a feminised masque.... It is through these fissures in the official court discourse... that the female voice was

The aim of this paper then is to offer a commentary of Sonnets 16 and 17 in Wroth’s *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* to show that Pamphilia’s repression also provokes the return of the repressed in her dreams and this phenomenon is part of Wroth’s depiction of Pamphilia’s psyche. My approach will combine close reading, the interpretation of iconography and emblems, and some notions from Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams*, and Lacan’s concepts on the Symbolic Order and metonymy.

First of all, though, I would like to point out as an introductory remark that, as part of those features in Wroth’s poetry that coincide with the characteristics of *écriture féminine*, we find the strategy of masquerade, *i.e.*, female expression undercover of an apparently male discourse and tradition.<sup>7</sup> Masquerade is actually substantiated in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* by means of the use and subversion of Petrarchan and Sidneian imagery that both hides and discloses the expression of female desire and sexual appetites. Ultimately, however, this subversion relies on and finds its explanation on certain common iconographic elements that, no doubt, Wroth was familiar with.<sup>8</sup>

The first sonnet in *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* constitutes a proof—almost an “ocular proof”—of Wroth’s inspiration on emblems and contemporary iconographic material. The description of the chariot of Venus (ll. 5-9) in Pamphilia’s dream-vision with which Wroth opens her sequence is nothing but an ekphrastic rendering—*i.e.*, a depiction with words—closely based on the illustration showing the chariot of Venus in Giordano Bruno’s *De imaginum, signorum et idearum compositione* (1591), a handbook on the creation of poetic

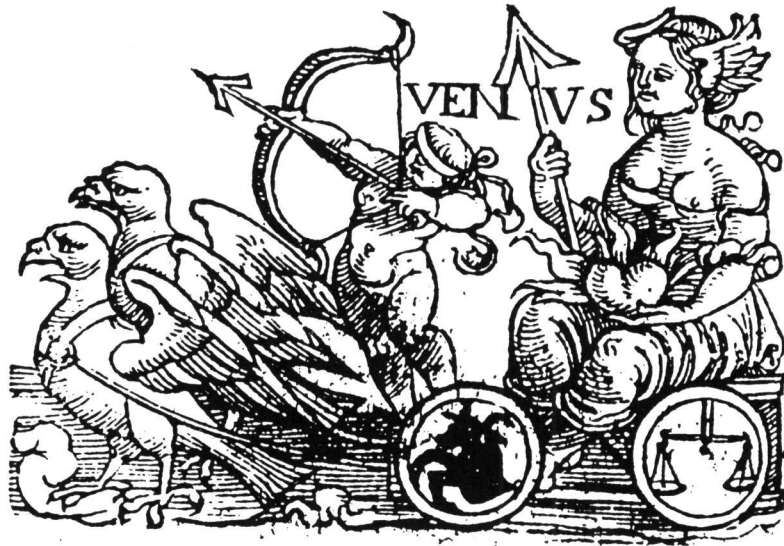
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able to escape, so that the tensions in the masque often became those of gender, replete with political as well as sexual signification” (Wynn 1992: 81; 82).

<sup>7</sup>In a note in Finucci (1994: 83 n17), there is a clear statement of what masquerade really entails: “Masquerade is the very definition of femininity precisely because it is constructed with reference to a male sign” (Rose 1982: 43).

<sup>8</sup>Paulissen points out that Wroth was influenced by emblems and iconography, and Giordano Bruno’s ideas on the composition of images as explained in his *Degli eroici furori* (1585), however her discussion of Wroth’s sonnets in this light remains general in outlook and does not propose a relationship between specific emblems or sources and particular sonnets. For references to emblematic influence, see Paulissen (1982: 12, 20, 33, 35, 39, 69, 123). Her commentary on Bruno’s influence is equally basic and broad in scope (Paulissen 1982: 119-131), although some of her observations are worth considering as possible avenues of investigation. On the other hand, Jorge Casanova, as I explained above in n2, does explore the connection between Van Veen’s emblems as well as other emblem books and Wroth’s sonnets. Actually, I am most grateful to Jorge Casanova for his remarks on the influence of Van Veen’s emblems on Wroth as he showed me the way for some of the developments that I present here. Casanova offered his remarks in a private conversation as part of his response to my Cora (Unpublished) in which I discussed Donne’s probable use of Van Veen’s emblems and other iconographic material as a source for his conceits (this paper remains unpublished as I have found further material that will allow me to offer a fuller discussion of the issue).

images for that merges the visual aspect of the art of memory (*ars memoriae*), combinatorics as well as a basic technique of association of ideas. Wroth's description has the same elements as those present in the woodcut (see *FIGURE 1*): "wing'd Desire" points to the doves that draw the chariot of Venus, who is sitting with her son, Cupid, at her feet, who is said to be "adding fire" to the various flaming hearts that she holds in her hand "above." Cupid's "adding fire" can be plainly understood as his shooting the arrows of love as the illustration shows, whereas the discrepancy between the illustration and the sonnet as to the number of burning hearts that Venus grasps and how and where she holds them, for in the woodcut she keeps just one close to her bosom, can be easily eased out either as a slight distortion on account of her writing not with the illustration before her, but visualising it imperfectly in her memory, or, alternately, as a fully intentional, individual variation and development from the original material.



*FIGURE 1.* As the observation of this woodcut and the reading of Sonnet 1 in Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* will show, the description of the chariot of Venus is closely modelled on its iconographic representation in Giordano Bruno's *De imaginum, signorum et idearum compositione. Ad omnia Inventionum, Dispositionum, & Memoria genera. Libri tres* (Francofurti: Apud Ioan. [W]echelum & Petrum Fischerum consortes, 1591). There is another representation of the chariot of Venus in Otto Van Veen (Otho Vaenius), *Amorum emblemata, figuris Aeneis incisa* (1608), another most likely source for Wroth's imagery, however, as regards to this particular element, the description in the sonnet and the woodcut are far too dissimilar to establish any possible relationship (see *FIGURE 2*). The woodcut from Bruno's volume is reproduced from Bruno (1991: 209).

1

When nights black mantle could most darknes prove,  
 And sleepe deaths Image did my senceses hiere,  
 From knowledg of my self, then thoughts did move  
 Swifter then those, most swiftnes need require:  
 In sleepe, a Chariot drawne by wing'd Desire 5  
 I sawe: wher sate bright Venus Queene of love,  
 And att her feete her sonne, still adding fire  
 To burning hearts which she did hold above,  
 Butt one hart flaming more then all the rest  
 The goddess held, and putt itt to my brest, 10  
 Deare sonne, now shutt sayd she: thus must wee winn;  
 Hee her obay'd, and martir'd my poore hart,  
 I, waking hop'd as dreames itt would depart,  
 Yett since: O mee: a lover I have binn.

(Text reproduced from Wroth 1983: 85)

May N. Paulissen misses this in her general discussion of the “neo-platonic” influence of Bruno, especially his *Eroici furori* (1585), on Wroth (1982: 119-130). Josephine Roberts (1983: 85) has suggested that this vision shows a resemblance to the description of the Chariot of Cupid in the opening of Petrarch’s *Trionfe d’Amore* (c.1352), and R. E. Pritchard (1996: 21) has also suggested the influence of Dante’s *Vita Nuova* III, 27-31 as regards the element of the flaming heart, however, the parallelisms between Wroth’s description and those of the Italian authors are not as patent as those with the woodcut in Bruno’s volume.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, there is another representation of the chariot of Venus in Otto Van Veen (Otho Vaenius), *Amorum emblemata, figuris Aeneis incisa* (1608), another most likely source for Wroth’s imagery, as I will discuss later. Nonetheless, the description in Wroth’s sonnet does not show as many similarities with this particular woodcut (see *FIGURE 2*) as with the one in Bruno’s book.<sup>10</sup> The chariot is drawn by doves, and Venus and Cupid occupy the same positions in it, but there is a big difference in the evident absence of the depiction of burning hearts. On the other hand, Wroth’s description of

<sup>9</sup>See Cora (fthc.) for further details on the classical influences and sources on Wroth’s depiction of the Chariot of Venus.

<sup>10</sup>In his dissertation, to which I had access only when revising this article for publication, Casanova discusses the connection between Wroth’s first sonnet and Van Veen’s illustration of the chariot of Venus too (Casanova 1999: 55-57), and he points to the differences with Alciato’s representation of the Triumph of Cupid (Emblem CV: “Potentissimus affectus amor”) to stress the filiation between Wroth’s sonnet and Van Veen’s woodcut. However, he does not refer to the connection with the woodcut in Bruno’s volume.

Cupid adding fire to the burning hearts of lovers can be at the most linked to Van Veen's representation in as much as Cupid bears a torch that stands for passion. At any rate then, Wroth's description of the Chariot of Venus would be a composite based on the woodcuts in Bruno's and Van Veen's volumes. The connection between Wroth's sonnets and Van Veen's emblems must be restricted to other parallelisms between the sonnets and other illustrations and admit combination with other sources of iconographic representations, a practice that, after all, is consistent with the art of memory and its use of emblems, emblematic title-pages and other visual elements taken from printed books.

Coming back to the text itself and its poetic diction, *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* is dominated by the images opposing the binary pairs of light / darkness, day / night, and warmth / cold subordinated to the apparently Petrarchan commonplace references to the lover's face in which the eyes as stars have a key role. Pamphilia repeatedly complains about the absence and inconstancy of her lover whose Sun-like face and only occasionally his star-like eyes are the sources of the "light," "day" and "pleasure" she would like to enjoy, and also the seat of the "might" that would make her feel "warmth." As he is away and betrays her love with other women, she is condemned to suffering "night" and "cold" "paine," "sorrowes," "woes," "harms," "torments," "disdaine," "despaire." She utters "groans" "sighs" and "wilings" (wailings), ever longing for "joys," "Loves force," "delights," "his might," "blisse" that springs from her lover's much repeated "sight."

Actually, this type of conceit involving astronomy and sex, although possibly owing much to Bruno's *Degli eroici furori* (Paulissen 1982: 123-128), is analogous to Fulke Greville's in *Caelica* (published in 1633), LVI, in which, significantly, he also employs the word "throne" to refer to the genitals of his Cynthia ("Look where lies the milken way, / Way unto that dainty throne, / Where while all the gods would play, / Vulcan thinks to dwell alone." Lines 21-24).<sup>11</sup>

Bearing in mind Freud's theory of wit (*Witz*), whose main elements are also the foundation for his interpretation of dreams, Wroth's imagery retains the Petrarchist and Sidneian condensation (*Verdichtung*) appertaining metaphor, but also introduces a conceptual displacement (*Verschiebung*) that, indeed, involves a literal displacement of the female beholder's focus of attention on the male anatomy from the face to the crotch. This is best illustrated by the very frequent

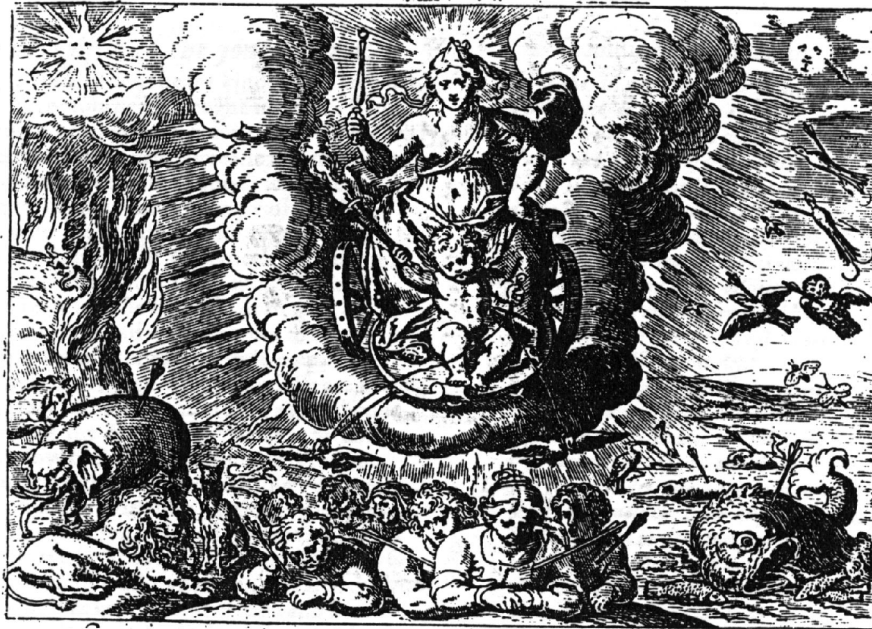
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<sup>11</sup>See APPENDIX for the whole text and my emphasis added to the lines that include sexual puns similar to those that Wroth uses. I am indebted to Moira P. Baker's article (1991) for my knowledge of Greville's poem.



type of zodiacal and astrological illustrations in which allegories for planets and zodiac signs hide their sexual organs with a representation of the planet who also happens to show a face, as the representation of Leo and the Sun in *FIGURE 3*. The reading of *Pamphilia and Amphilanthus*, Sonnet 2 in connection with *FIGURE 3*, as if they became a virtual pairing of *pictura* and epigram in an emblem, will show that Wroth’s witty use of Petrarchan topical metaphors does in fact allow her to express what is repressed by dominant patriarchy.<sup>12</sup>

**PROH QVANTA POTENTIA REGNI EST VENVS ALMATVI,**



*FIGURE 2*. Chariot of Venus in the introduction to the book of emblems by Otto Van Veen (Otho Vaenius) *Amorum emblemata* (1608). Reproduced from Vaenius 1996: n.p.

As Jacques Lacan points out in his composite theory, based on Saussure’s and Freud’s ideas, of the unconscious being organised like a code (the letter of the unconscious) that can and must be interpreted, metonymy is central to both dreams and symbolism, and the connection that metaphor establishes between two signifiers is based on metonymy as it is the displacement of one word for another (Lacan 1997: 157).<sup>13</sup> In Wroth’s poetry, the Sun and eyes of Petrarchan

<sup>12</sup>For a discussion of this pairing between Sonnet 2 and the illustration, see Cora (fthc).

<sup>13</sup>In her feminist introduction to Lacan’s psychoanalysis, Elizabeth Grosz clearly establishes Lacan’s identification between condensation and metaphor, displacement and metonymy, and desire and the “movement” from one term to its substitute. She explains that:

and Sidneian metaphors are transformed by virtue of displacement into a metonymy for the expression of female desire, as the vehicle of the metaphors refers to a different tenor, a new anatomical location being substituted for the traditional one. Wroth's particular use of imagery confirms the difference between metaphor and metonymy as being essentially "male" and "female" respectively (Culler 1987: 60), and also Lacan's view that metonymy has the power to circumvent the obstacles of social censure by making its very oppression its vehicle of expression (Lacan 1980a: 158) and that "the symptom *is* a metaphor whether one likes it or not, as desire *is* a metonymy, however funny people may find the idea" (Lacan 1997: 175).<sup>14</sup> Furthering the Lacanian approach, it can be said that Wroth benefits from as well as subverts the Name of the Father. In this particular case, the Name of the Father being the conventions of the male sonneteers as to figures of speech and symbolic order.<sup>15</sup>

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Metaphor, the substitution of one term for another, is identified by Lacan with the Freudian process of condensation. He equates metonymy with the process of displacement, that "veering off of signification" which primary processes utilize to evade the censor. The metaphoric process, the submersion of one term underneath another, provides the general model for the unconscious symptom: the term having "fallen below the bar," becomes repressed, and the signifier which replaces it or [*sic*] becomes its symptom. In metonymy, unlike the hierarchical, repressive structure of metaphor, relevant connections are not so much modelled to the relation between the latent and manifest as based on the connection between a term and what substitutes for it. In this movement from one term to its substitute, Lacan will recognize the movement of *desire*. Desire too is based on a chain of substitution whereby the first (lost) object of desire generates a potentially infinite chain of (only partially satisfactory) substitutes. (Grosz 1990: 100)

<sup>14</sup>In the work I mentioned in the last note, Culler sees three different moments or stages in feminist criticism, one in which women identify with the concerns of female characters, in a second moment, women free themselves from the identification with the male reader and read as women, drawing from their own experience, and realising that male readings are not the exclusively rational ones, and a third moment in which women identify the ways in which notions of the rational are linked and equated with male interests. In his analysis of the third moment of female criticism, he relates Freud's explanation of the establishment of patriarchy in *Moses and Monotheism* and Dorothy Dinnerstein's "psychology of nurture arrangements" and their influence in society and its construction of genders, and points out that as a consequence of a man's uncertainty about whether his progeny is really his own, man privileges the symbolic and abstract with metaphor as it is based on substitution, whereas women do metonymy, which is based on contiguity. I think it is worth while quoting the pertinent excerpt:

Men's powerful "impulse to affirm and tighten by cultural inventions their unsatisfactorily loose mammalian connection with children" leads them to value highly cultural inventions of a symbolic nature [Dinnerstein 1976: 80-81]. One might predict an inclination to value what are generally termed metaphorical relations —relations of resemblance between separate items that can be substituted for one another, such as obtain between the father and the miniature replica with the same name, the child— over metonymical, maternal relationships based on contiguity. (Culler 1987: 60)

<sup>15</sup>For Lacan's theory of the Name of the Father, see Lacan (1997).

This use of iconography is part of Wroth’s dependence on emblems and other printed illustrations will inform my close readings of the sonnets. Wroth’s most likely inspiration on iconographic sources does in fact offer a link with Freud’s interpretation of dreams as it seems most likely that she was inspired by emblems dealing with the particular significance of dreams in the context of a love relationship.



*FIGURE 3.* Zodiacal sign of Leo. Reproduced from Agrippa von Nettesheim (1998: 432). Reading the text of the sonnet in conjunction with this image completely changes its interpretation from Petrarchan imitation to that of a text of an independent female voice who expresses desire.

2

Deare eyes how well (indeed) you doe adorne  
That blessed sphaere, which gazing soules hold deere:  
The loved place of sought for triumphs, neere:  
The court of glory, where Loves force was borne:  
How may they terme you Aprills sweetest morne  
When pleasing looks, from those bright lights appeere  
A sun-shine day; from cloudes, and mists still cleere:  
Kind nursing fires for wishes yet vnborne!  
Two starrs of Heaven, sent downe to grace the Earthe,

5

Plac'd in that Throne which gives all joyes theyr birthe;           10  
 Shining, and burning; pleasing yett their charmes;  
 Which wounding, even in hurts are deem'd delights;  
 Soe pleasant is their force! Soe great theyr mights  
 As, happy, they can triumph in theyr harmes.

(Text reproduced from Wroth 1983: 85-86).

Quite appropriately, on the other end of the time-line, and closing the circle of my referential framework, Freud interprets dreams as if they were hieroglyphics and emblems for, indeed, he discovered that the language of dreams is a symbolic language like that of emblems in which a symbol is a symptom of what is repressed. As he himself points out *The Interpretation of Dreams*, the visual nature of the dream work is comparable to this type of images and their enigmatic content:

The dream-thoughts and the dream-content lie before us like two versions of the same content in two different languages, or rather, the dream content looks to us like a translation of the dream-thoughts into another mode of expression, and we are supposed to get to know its signs and laws of grammatical construction by comparing the original and the translation. Once we have learnt what these are, the dream-thoughts will be easy for us to understand without any further ado. The content of the dream is given as it were in the form of hieroglyphs whose signs are to be translated one by one into the language of the dream-thoughts. We would obviously be misled if we were to read these signs according to their pictorial value and not according to their referentiality as signs. (Freud 1999: 210)

Lacan himself also develops this idea and extends the association of symbols as symptoms with the iconographic material so prevalent in the Renaissance and underlines their enigmatic nature. Lacan explains:

Hieroglyphics of hysteria, blazons of phobia, labyrinths of the *Zwangsneurose*—charms of impotence, enigmas of inhibition, oracles of anxiety—talking arms of character, seals of self-punishment, disguises of perversion—these are the hermetic elements that our exegesis resolves, the equivocations that our invocation dissolves, the artifices that our dialectic absolves, in a deliverance of the [i]mprisoned meaning, from the revelation of the palimpsest to the given word of the mystery and to the pardon of speech. (Lacan 1997: 69-70)

This quotation reveals that the exegesis and hermeneutics of emblems and that of dreams is not that dissimilar and, consequently, only proves that such a linkage was not only possible in its origin as a source of inspiration for poetry, especially if considering, as I will show, that there are emblems dealing with the world of dreams and the “psychology” of love, but it also results in a most pertinent instrument for interpreting poems such as Wroth’s sonnets 16 and 17.

The addressee of sonnet 16 is Sleep that is allegorised throughout the text only apparently following the Petrarchan and Sidneian practice. However, the first indication of the feminine voice and its subversion of the Name of the Father, *i.e.*, the whole symbolic order of male sonneteers, as part of the expression of female desire, is the first part of the first line in which Pamphilia begs Sleep not to possess her. The injunction “possess mee nott” introduces the notion of violent sexual intercourse and rape that is further developed in the rest of the line and in line two, as the traditional, commonplace comparison between sleep and death is transformed into an apparently threatening allegory that causes the speaker’s fear. Wroth herself introduces such a common identification between sleep and death in sonnet 1 when she refers to sleep as “deaths Image” (line 2, see text above), but in sonnet 16 the dead metaphors even by Renaissance standards that describe the characteristics of deep sleep, *i.e.*, its heaviness and resemblance to death, expressed in the words “heavy” and “deathlike”, are resuscitated—so to speak—by the sexual puns that “deathlike” and “death” also offer in Renaissance English, and as a result these metaphors simultaneously endow this allegorical figure with physicality and fleshiness. Therefore, Sleep not only resembles death in the usual association between them, but also assumes the form, or, rather, plays the part, of a rapist whose heavy and mighty frame menaces the bodily integrity and the very existence of the vulnerable female speaker. In lines 3 and 4, Sleep’s moral character is further tainted as he is a counterfeiter, even a supplanter of death, and this apparently only provokes Pamphilia’s moral revulsion and indignation. Therefore, lines 3 and 4 might be interpreted as Pamphilia’s brave disdain for the *simulacrum* of death and a yearning for the real experience of life’s end springing from her zeal for truth and honesty and also her melancholy for having been abandoned by Amphilanthus as the *Urania* tells us. The lines could even be read as an example of female modesty and honour in accordance with the strictures demanded from women by patriarchy: since Sleep is represented as a rapist, supplanter and liar, then, implicitly, Pamphilia’s rejection of Sleep and desire for death is enriched by the implication, prompted by patriarchal order and its notions of honour, that death would be preferable to a destiny that is only “worse than death” as the absurd Victorian euphemism used to term it.

Obviously, these limited interpretations are the only ones that are possible if the verses are read unimaginatively, superficially, and too closely in the wake of Petrarch, Sir Philip and Sir Robert Sidney, that is, taking for granted that Wroth imitates these male authors and respects their symbolical order. But in fact this is not so, and we can actually see that the first quatrain also introduces the notion of sexual dreams and the voicing of female desire, that is later developed in the rest of the sonnet as I will show.

In lines 3 and 4, quite paradoxically and surprisingly too, Pamphilia reveals herself as not being so much afraid of Sleep-Death or even Sleep the rapist, as annoyed and spiteful because of the very unreality of Sleep's male body. The *non sequitur* formed by the two halves of the quatrain shifts focus from the connotations of rape to the delusions of sleep and the indignation they provoke in the speaker because of their very inexistence. Consequently, Wroth's Pamphilia accepts this rape scenario *qua* fiction, as it just belongs to the realm of dreams, and she directs all her resent towards the fictitious nature of sexual intercourse in dreams, rather than the menacing and negative form and trappings it takes.

Curiously enough, we find an early example of rape dream fantasy that confirms what E. Ann Kaplan points out in her interesting article "Is the Gaze Male?" (Kaplan 1984) in which she deals with the objectification of women in cinema from a psychoanalytical point of view. Kaplan explains that films directed by men show sadism in the form of voyeurism and fetishism with which the male spectator is prompted to identify.<sup>16</sup> Women in films are relegated to being the object of desire in a masochistic and passive role, and the female spectator is to identify with this role. On discussing the relationship between films and dreams, Kaplan points out that such positionings of women in male films do actually reflect women's sexual fantasies. Kaplan refers to the work of Nancy Friday (1981) and states that her books:

... provide discourses on the level of dream, and, however questionable as scientific evidence, show narratives in which the woman speaker largely arranges the scenario for her sexual pleasure so that things are done to her, or in which she is the object of men's lascivious gaze. Often, there is pleasure in anonymity, or in a strange man approaching her when she is with her husband. Rarely does the dreamer initiate the sexual activity, and the man's large, erect penis usually is central in the fantasy. Nearly all the fantasies have the dominance-submission pattern, with the woman in the latter place. (Kaplan 1984: 328)

In the case of Wroth's *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* we actually find a woman writer who not only shows that such fantasies do in some cases populate the female mind, but also benefits from them in order to build the psychology of her female speaker. The great difference with literature or films created by men

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<sup>16</sup>These ideas were first formulated by Laura Mulvey in a ground-breaking essay (1999). Kaplan also draws from and develops Mulvey's political application of psychoanalysis to cinema, especially as to the connection between agency, sadism and fetishism and the male gaze and passiveness, masochism and woman as object that is contemplated by the male gaze. Whereas Mulvey identifies camera work in mainstream cinema as the articulation of a male gaze, Kaplan opens the way for a consideration of how films by women do and should create a female gaze, heterosexual or lesbian.

is, of course, that Wroth uses this dream fantasy not to perpetuate the masochistic position of women, but to portray a mind that is tortured by repression induced by her speaker's total internalisation of the patriarchal value of female constancy. As I pointed earlier, Wroth does not create Pamphilia as an example of virtue that should be adopted by her female readers, but as an illustration of the negative condition of women subjected to an order that privileges men.

The second quatrain in the sonnet continues the development of Pamphilia's reproach to Sleep about the insubstantiality of what she sees in her dreams and confirms the characteristics of the female sexual fantasy as summarised by Kaplan. Pamphilia complains that the false figures that scare her in her dreams are sometimes anonymous male figures, sometimes her own love, *i.e.*, Amphilanthus. Although Wroth introduces the feeling of fear in the first line, as part of the labyrinthine style she creates a paradox that points to gratification and pleasure by describing what Pamphilia sees as the “liknes of a hopefull spright,” the vague adjective “hopefull” admitting quite a range of interpretations, among them the suggestion of a knightly, virile, well-endowed saviour or rescuer who can satisfy her delicately in all her needs as opposed to the rapist figure in the preceding quatrain.<sup>17</sup>

Pamphilia's paradoxical feelings in dreams are further complicated by the vision of her elusive and unfaithful love, Amphilanthus. Here, Pamphilia's

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<sup>17</sup>Being a rescuer or saviour of the damsel in distress / fallen woman / *femme fatale* is precisely one of the male sexual fantasies and also one of the ways—together with investigating, watching the woman (voyeurism) and substituting an object for the absent penis (fetishism)—to cope with the castration anxiety with which the male unconscious associates woman and her anatomy. Mulvey points out:

The male unconscious has two avenues of escape from this castration anxiety: preoccupation with the re-enactment of the original trauma (investigating the woman, demystifying her mystery) counterbalanced by the devaluation punishment or saving of the guilty object (an avenue typified by the concerns of the *film noir* [or chivalric romance for that matter]); or else complete disavowal of castration by the substitution of a fetish object or turning the represented figure itself into a fetish so that it becomes reassuring rather than dangerous (hence over-valuation [*sic*] the cult of the female star). (Mulvey 1999: 591)

Kaplan, following another book by Nancy Friday (1980), indicates this nature of male fantasies in which the man has a heroic behaviour and is the wielder of power and control and adds to the idea of male voyeurism:

It was predictable that many of the male fantasies in Friday's book *Men in Love* would show the speaker constructing events so that he is in control: again, the “I” of identity remains central, as it was not in the female narrations. Many male fantasies focus on the man's excitement arranging for his woman to expose herself (or even give herself) to other men, while he watches. (Kaplan 1984: 328)

Male voyeurism as a negotiation of the dangerous female sex in Renaissance poetry is precisely one of the main concerns in the essay by Baker (1991).

reproach to Sleep stems from the marred happiness and frustration that, on waking up, produces the realisation that the dream is only a fantasy and Amphilanthus remains unattainable. Pamphilia is embittered because, in Freudian terms, the dream is just a case of wish-fulfilment, a compensation for what she cannot get in reality, as well as a manifestation of her repressed libido on account of her chastity and faithfulness to her unfaithful love.

Moreover, the paradox of this dream in being both a source of fear and pleasure is consistent with Freud's theories of the uncanny and dreams (even anxiety dreams) being a mechanism of wish-fulfilment. Thus, Sleep depicted as a rapist that seems to threaten Pamphilia complies with the mysterious figure of the uncanny for it is, as Freud points out in his essay dealing with this phenomenon: "undoubtedly related to what is frightening —to what arouses dread and horror" (Freud 1955: 219, cited in Finucci 1994: 77), and at the same time this fearful unknown springs from what has been repressed. Freud summarises this filiation in the conclusion to his essay:

In the first place, if psycho-analytic theory is correct in maintaining that every emotional affect, whatever its quality, is transformed by repression into morbid anxiety, then among such cases of anxiety there must be a class in which the anxiety can be shown to come from something repressed which *recurs* [or *returns*, for that matter]. This class of morbid anxiety would then be no other than what is uncanny, irrespective of whether it originally aroused dread or some other affect. In the second place, if this is indeed the secret nature of the uncanny, we can understand why the usage of speech has extended *das Heimliche* into its opposite *das Unheimliche*, for this uncanny is in reality nothing new or foreign, but something familiar and old — established in the mind that has been estranged only by the process of repression. (Freud 1998: 166)<sup>18</sup>

That is, the disquieting and ominous figures of Sleep and those other "men" who appear in Pamphilia's dreams share the unfamiliar-familiarity of the uncanny and its origin in anxiety produced by sexual repression.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, their fear-pleasure ambiguity also corresponds to the paradoxical effect caused by anxiety. Actually, in his theory on the interpretation of dreams, Freud explains that even anxiety dreams are wish-fulfilment dreams, although they

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<sup>18</sup>Unfortunately, as the two previous parenthetical references clearly indicate in my text, I have been unable to use *Standard Edition* of Freud's works. For the benefit of those who have access or would be willing to consult the *Standard Edition*, the reference for the essay on "The Uncanny" is Freud 1955: 219-252.

<sup>19</sup>For an interesting study on the Uncanny, the return of the repressed, and classical and Renaissance epic poetry see Bellamy (1994). For an essay on the female body as the source of attraction and fear for men and, hence, the Uncanny, see Baker (1991).



introduce an element that risks their own wish-fulfilment function. Freud states that:

... anxiety in dreams can be psychoneurotic originating in psychosexual excitations, and in their case the anxiety corresponds to repressed libido. In such instances, this anxiety has the significance of a neurotic symptom, as the entire anxiety-dream does, and we are standing on the border where the dream's wish-fulfilling intention breaks down. (Freud 1999: 182)

The connection between anxiety and pleasure in this dream sonnet is further explained because it is anxiety what precisely allows dreams to have a content undisguised by censorship. As Freud points out:

...an anxiety-dream only comes about if the censorship has been entirely or partially overcome, while on the other hand the censorship is overcome the more easily if anxiety is already present as a current sensation deriving from somatic sources. (Freud 1999: 205)

Thus, Freud's psychoanalytical theory provides the background against which the psychology of Pamphilia is identified as that of a neurotic condition induced by an excessive morality and, clearly, provides arguments to interpret Wroth's creation of Pamphilia as her intention of depicting a “psychological profile” —if the anachronism is allowed— that reflects the victimisation of women when they obsessively assimilate chastity as a response to their husband's inconstancy as demanded and favoured by the patriarchal order. In fact, this is consistent with her interest in the minds of her characters in the *Urania*, for in the fourth book, just to mention an example, Wroth deals with magic and the enchantment in the “Hell of Deceit” as a psychological device to explore the motivations for the estrangement between Pamphilia to Amphilanthus.

Within the frame of the relationship between emblems and dreams that I discussed earlier in this paper, it is most likely that Wroth found inspiration in Van Veen's *Amorum emblemata*. Possibly as a result of a suggestion by the author of the English epigrams for the London edition of the emblems, R[ichard] [Rowlands] V[erstegen] (c. 1550-1640),<sup>20</sup> the volume was dedicated both to Philip Herbert (1584-1650), Earl of Montgomery, and most significantly, William Herbert (1580-1630), Earl of Pembroke, who also happened to be Lady Mary Wroth's cousin and lover as well as the father of two of her children, and most probably, the “Will” of some of Wroth's sonnets. Therefore it is quite possible that the Earl of Herbert owned a copy of Van

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<sup>20</sup>I have drawn my information on the English edition of Van Veen's emblems from Porteman's introduction (1996: 1-20). See this introduction (7-9) for further details on the English edition and translator.

Veen's book and that Wroth had access to it may have been included in John Florio's bequest of Italian books to the Earl of Pembroke which was to be kept "either at Wilton or Baynards Castle in London," i.e., Lady Mary's family home (*Dictionary of National Biography*, VII, 336-337, cited in Paulissen 1982: 88).

As regards to sonnets 16 and 17, the influence of Van Veen's book of emblems seems to have its precise origin in emblems 148 and 167, for they deal with love and amorous obsession and the dreams they provoke in the lover.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, sonnet 16 shows coincidences with emblem 148 (see *FIGURE 4*) because the allegory of Sleep in the sonnet is as troublesome a figure that prevents rest as Cupid in the Latin epigraph of the emblem. The difference is, naturally, that in the sonnet Sleep is certainly a more ambiguous personification because of its sinister nature, as I have already explained. Besides, Sleep is also related with "joy" and "delight" and we find the same connection between Repose and "joy" and "delight" in the English epigram to the emblem. Wroth benefited from this relationship and built on it her own more paradoxical and cryptic version to convey her sexual meaning.

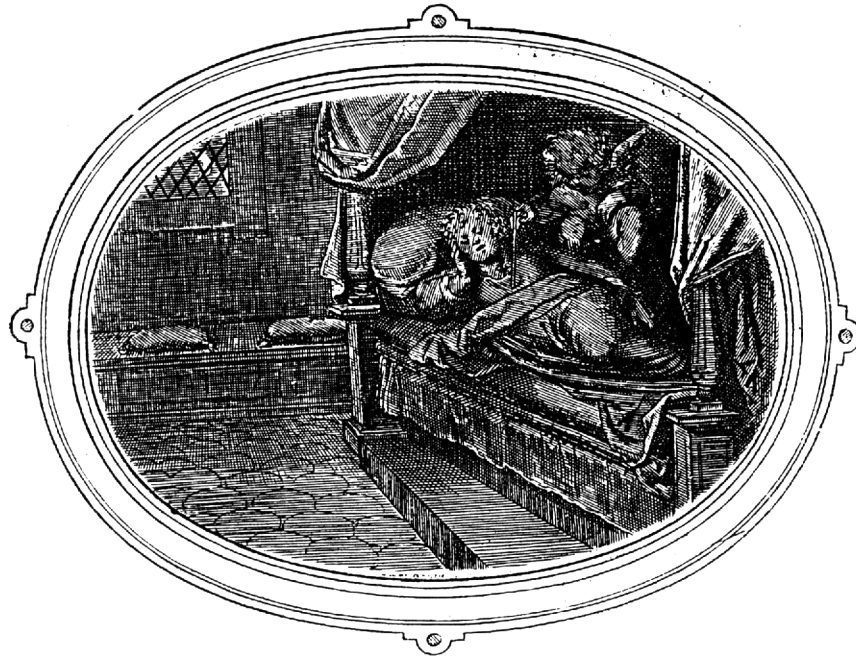
The motto in emblem 167 states that the lover sees his love in dreams (see *FIGURE 5*) and the English epigram explains that these dreams "do produce joy" and the lover "doth enjoy" his "desired blisse," but it also shows the disappointment inherent to wish-fulfilment dreams when the dreamer wakes up, so the content and phrasing are very similar to Wroth's sonnet 16, but for the exception of Wroth's sexual puns. Curiously enough, although many ambiguous Latin epigrams add sexual connotations to Van Veen's emblems, that is not the case in emblem 167. On the other hand, "enjoy" and "desired blisse" are sufficiently ambiguous so as to allow a sexual meaning. Wroth changes the sex of the dreamer, reproduces this vocabulary throughout her sequence from the starting point in sonnet 2, and it does acquire sexual overtones, as does the opposition between light and darkness, warmth and cold, that is best understood by the analogy with the astrological allegories of the zodiacal signs and planets as I have shown before. Thus, in sonnet 16, the ambiguity of "Joying" and "delight" is enhanced by its connection with the sexual aspect introduced in the first quatrain. These words could be interpreted as mere contentment of seeing again the object of her love, but they point to the joys and delights of the flesh, the satisfaction of the repressed libido that only finds an outlet in dreams.

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<sup>21</sup>Casanova (1999: 60-64) pairs these sonnets with the same Van Veen emblems, however, he emphasises the neoplatonic nature of such dream-visions and, therefore, misses the sexual content of both Van Veen's emblems and Wroth's sonnets.

A M O R V M.

149



T 3

P[ublius] Syr[us]. AMOR DIVRNVS NOCTVRNVSQUE COMES.

*Quám fidus Pylades Amor est noctu[que] diu[que]!  
Quám turbat somnos sæpè Cupido meos!  
Somne quies rerum, placidissime somne Deorum,  
Huc huc ad nostros lumina verte lares.*

[P(ublius) Syr(us). LOVE IS A COMPANION NIGHT AND DAY.

Pylades, how faithful is Love, both day and night!  
How often Cupid troubles my dreams!  
Sleep, the quiet of all things, most placid sleep of the gods,  
Here and there, turn the lights to our protector gods.]

*Loue night and day attendant.*

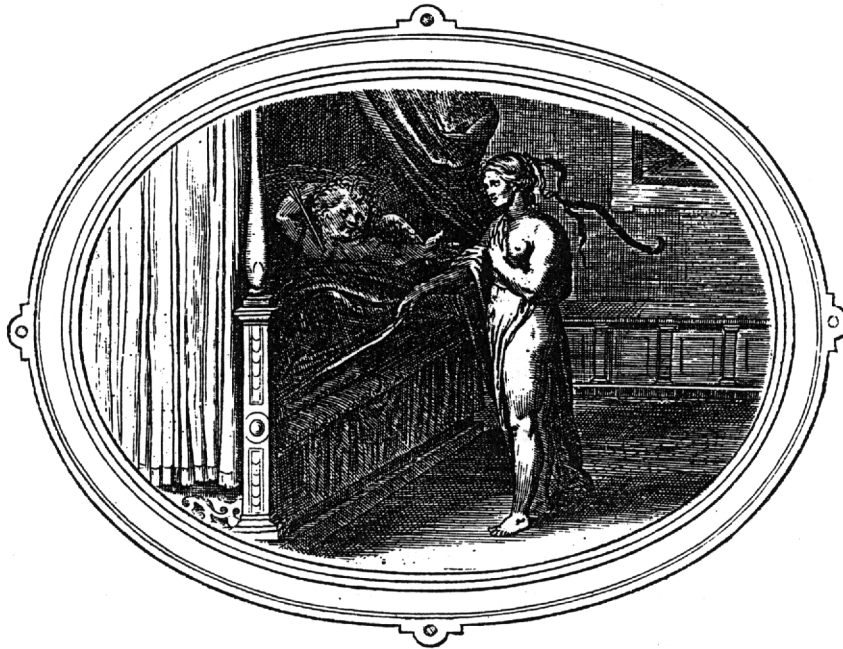
Loue alwayes doth attend the louer day and night,  
For if hee sleep or wake still with him will hee bee,  
Awake to him hee speakes, In dreames hee doth him see,  
Repose enioyd of all, denyeth him delight.

FIGURE 4. Emblem 148 in *Amorum emblemata* by Otto Van Veen (Otho Vaenius). The translation of the Latin text is my own. Reproduced from Vaenius (1996: 148, 149). Wroth's

*Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, sonnet 16 shows coincidences with the emblem, because the sonnet's Sleep is a troublesome figure as in the Latin epigraph, and it is related with "joy" and "delight" as in the English epigraph to the emblem. The latter must be understood as "Delight denyeth him repose enjoyd of all", which in fact leaves room for a sexual interpretation. Wroth establishes the relationship in a more paradoxical and cryptic form to convey her sexual meaning. See sonnet 16 below.

## A M O R V M.

167



P[ublius] Syr[us]. AMANS QVOD SVSPICATUR, VIGILANS SOMNIAT.

Ouid. *Ante meos oculos præsto est tua semper imago,  
Et videor vultus mente videre tuos.*

Terent. *Hi qui amant, ipsi sibi somnia fingunt.*

[P(ublius) Syr(us). The lover dreams of what he admires while awake.

Ovid. Your image is always ready before my eyes,  
And it seems to me I see your features in my mind.

Terence. Those who love, delude themselves with dreams]

*Dreames do produce ioy.*

Loues fancies in the day, turne into dreames by night.  
Then thinks hee that his loue before him present is,

And that hee doth enioy his hartes desyred blisse,  
But waxing once awake hee loseth that delight.

FIGURE 5. Emblem 167 in *Amorum emblemata* by Otto Van Veen (Otho Vaenius). The translation of the Latin text is my own. Reproduced from Vaenius (1996: 166, 167). Wroth may have been inspired by possibilities of the words “joy,” “enjoy,” “desired bliss” and “delight” in the English epigraph of Van Veen’s emblem. See sonnets below.

16

Sleepe fy possess mee nott, nor doe nott fright  
Mee with thy heavy, and thy deathlike might  
For counterfetting’s vilder then deaths sight,  
And such deluding more my thoughts doe spite.  
Thou suff’rest fauldest shapes my soule t’affright 5  
Some times in liknes of a hopefull spright,  
And oft times like my love as in dispite  
Joying thou canst with mallice kill delight,  
When I (a poore foole made by thee) think joy  
Doth flow, when thy fond shadows doe destroy 10  
My that while senceles self, left free to thee,  
Butt now doe well, lett mee for ever sleepe,  
And soe for ever that deare Image keepe,  
Or still wake, that my senses may bee free.

17

Sweet shades why doe you seeke to give delight  
To mee who deeme delight in this vilde place  
Butt torment, sorrow, and mine owne disgrace  
To taste of joy, or your vaine pleasing sight;  
Show them your pleasures who saw never night 5  
Of grieffe, wher joyings fauning, smiling face  
Appeers as day, wher grieffe found never space  
Yet for a sigh, a groane, or envies spite;  
Butt O on mee a world of woes doe ly,  
Or els on mee all harmes strives to rely, 10  
And to attend like servants bound to mee,  
Heat in desire, while frosts of care I prove,  
Wanting my love, yett surfett doe with love  
Burne, and yett freeze, better in hell to bee.

(Texts reproduced from Wroth 1983: 95-96)

The sexual nature of Pamphilia’s dream is confirmed by her having an orgasm as the first tercet indicates, however cryptically. In this tercet, Pamphilia offers more details about her “delight” that is almost destroyed by the impression of seeing Amphilanthus. It is remarkable that this danger of losing “delight” coincides with a very specific moment as the repeated connector

“when” indicates. In that very instant, Pamphilia, completely deluded by her dreams, *i.e.*, made a fool by Sleep, thinks “that joy / Doth flow”, an expression that associates both a sudden burst of current of energy and lubricity to the mere feeling of happiness. A sudden release that is caused the very moment that the figures that appear in the dream “destroy” her, the very word harking back to the *double entendre* of the “deathlike might” of Sleep the rapist. The complete defencelessness and abandon to Sleep’s possession contained in the third line of the tercet only underline this orgasmic moment in Pamphilia’s dream, even if, paradoxically, she reminds us that in fact she is only dreaming as she, indeed, is “senceless”, that is, unconscious.

Having reached climax, Pamphilia asks Sleep to allow her to keep the Image of his Love most likely to stay in a state of “bliss” in which this fantasy of copulation with her loved-one would be carried out endlessly as in a sexual coma. The other option for Sleep is to leave her alone so that she is able to regain full control of her consciousness, her conscience, her sex, and indeed her chastity.

Sonnet 17 also deals with dreams but is even more dramatic than the preceding one and Pamphilia is more adamant in rejecting this type of sexual dreams. So we can actually see that Pamphilia is so neurotic a character that she even resents having dreams of a sexual content. Still figures of men try to give Pamphilia “delight”, that is, she dreams of men in a sexual context, but this clashes with her rejection of sexuality and adoption of chastity. Therefore, her mind is tortured as she refuses to “taste of joy,” a phrase that introduces the very frequent connection between eating and sex,<sup>22</sup> a linkage that is emphasised and developed by adding implications of oral sex by the end of line four if we understand “vaine pleasing sight” in a further association with the zodiacal iconography that I indicated earlier.

In the second quatrain, the sexual character of these figures becomes more evident with the use of the word “pleasures” to refer to what the “Sweet shades” have to offer, an interpretation that again benefits from the Freudian displacement and Lacanian metonymy of the superposition of face and crotch that qualifies the light and warmth imagery in the sonnets and that we can identify in “joyings fauning, smiling face / Appears as day.” It is evident that Pamphilia is angry with this kind of visions that only are a source of torment for

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<sup>22</sup>See for instance John Donne’s “Elegie [XVIII]: Loves Progress” and Shakespeare’s *Much Ado about Nothing*. In the latter the metaphors involving eating, “cannibalism” and sex are recurrent throughout the text. Another Shakespearean example is *The Taming of the Shrew* in which Petruchio tames Kate by depriving her of food and sexual intercourse. In *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, such relationship is established in sonnet 13 [P15]: “Deare fammish nott what you your self gave food.”

her as her relationship with Amphilanthus is disrupted by his absence. She only deems such dreams as justifiable or welcome in the case of an untroubled, sincere, faithful relationship in which sex between the two members of the couple is based on mutual trust and fidelity.

In the first tercet, Pamphilia’s “woes” and “harms” acquire physicality very much like Sleep the rapist in the previous sonnet, and they “lie” on her, pointing not only to the metaphorical burden of miseries, but also to a sexual assault and rape because of the very terms allegorised (especially “harms”). The last line even seems to introduce the notion that male servants try to occupy the place of Amphilanthus in Pamphilia’s bed, thus adding a twist, implying some kind of entanglement, to the primary meaning of “bound” that points to the usual, customary obligations of servants.

The last tercet groups Petrarchan paradoxes to express Pamphilia’s state of confusion, and their higher sexual charge makes the sexual content of the sonnet evident and reveals that Pamphilia’s dreams are erotic. Her “Heat in desire” corresponds to her longing for Amphilanthus, but also to what she experiments in those dreams, whereas “frosts of care” are her mortification, her shame caused by the conflict between having these dreams and her obsessive morality. She misses and desires the man she loves, but she is also the object of the love and sexual desire of those men she sees in dreams. The oneiric event is expressed with a metaphor that links eating and sex and also suggests orality. The paradox in the last line opposing “burne” and “freeze” summarises the two levels of her experience: the oneiric one in which censorship is overcome by the full charge of the repressed, and the conscious one, in which she actually hates and tries to avoid what takes place in the erotic dreams only adding, in a vicious circle, to her obsessive neurosis by reinforcing repression, the very mechanism that provokes her anxiety and her sexual dreams.

As a conclusion then, these two sonnets and their depiction of Pamphilia’s psychology, that is best explained by a framework combining iconography and psychoanalysis, show that Wroth’s sequence is far too different from following the tradition or the Name of the Father that creates the symbolic order of Petrarchan and Sidneian sonnet sequences. In fact, Wroth’s sonnets encodes a proto-feminist message that is utterly misinterpreted if her message is read exclusively in the light of the male symbolic order. Wroth genders the genre and quite paradoxically, as her own style is paradoxical, she puts the return of the repressed in her speaker’s mind and dreams to the service of creating a female gaze and voice that allow for what from a gender- and sociologically speaking point of view has also been termed the “return of the repressed.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>I cannot agree with Jennifer Laws (1996) who holds that Wroth’s poems are not gendered:

## APPENDIX.

FULKE GREVILLE'S *CAELICA*, LVI.

I have added emphasis for those lines and sections that show parallelisms with Wroth's Sonnet 2 and may have actually served her as a precedent for this type of astronomical, zodiacal and sexual conceit. The text is reproduced from Greville (1973: 26-28). The notes are my own.

## LVI

All my senses, like beacon's flame,  
 Gave alarum to desire  
 To take arms in Cynthia's name,  
 And set all my thoughts on fire:  
 Fury's wit persuaded me,  
 Happy love was hazard's heir,  
 Cupid did best shoot and see  
 In the night where smooth is fair;  
 Up I start believing well  
 To see if Cynthia were awake;                   10  
 Wonder I saw, who can tell?  
 And thus unto myself I spake:  
 "Sweet God Cupid where am I,  
 That by pale Diana's light  
 Such rich beauties do espy,  
 As harm our *senses with delight?*  
 Am I borne up to the skies?  
*See where Jove and Venus shine,*  
*Showing in her heavenly eyes*  
*That desire is divine:*                               20  
*Look where lies the milken way,*  
*Way unto that dainty throne,<sup>a</sup>*  
*Where while all the gods would play,*  
*Vulcan thinks to dwell alone.*

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contrary to our expectations, Wroth is not particularly interested in gender issues in this sequence (I am not making any claims about her other writings or her personal values); but in this sequence she appears to be concerned not so much with gender as with genre: "The lack of interest in gender informs the whole sequence..." (Laws 1996).

<sup>a</sup>See *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus*, sonnet 2, line 10 above for an analogous use of "throne" as a metaphor for the genitals.





Nor, if rivers be unkind,  
 Turn away or leave to love. 60  
*There stand I, like Arctic pole,*  
*Where Sol passeth o'er the line,<sup>c</sup>*  
*Mourning my benighted soul,*  
*Which so loseth light divine.*  
 There stand I like men that preach  
 From the execution place,  
*At their death content to teach*  
*All the world with their disgrace:<sup>d</sup>*  
*He that lets his Cynthia lie,*  
 Naked on a bed of play, 70  
*To say prayers ere she die,*  
 Teacheth time to run away.  
 Let no love-desiring heart,  
 In the stars go seek his fate,  
 Love is only Nature's art,  
 Wonder hinders love and hate.  
*None can well behold with eyes,*  
 But what underneath him lies.

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<sup>c</sup>A metaphorical reference to his erection also playing with the notion of the cold of frustration and the loss of the heat of excitation.

<sup>d</sup>Greville uses as a conceit the erection provoked (often even reaching ejaculation) as part of the effects on man of the execution by hanging. It both emphasises the idea that the satisfaction of his desire remains "hanging," that is, unsatisfied, delayed, frustrated, and also introduces the connection between death and "the little death" or sexual climax that is later developed in the poem and is a Renaissance commonplace.

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